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SPIRITUALITY

EDITORIAL

THE THEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF
THE SYRO-MALABAR QURBANA

Sebastian Athappilly CMI

CELEBRATIVE ETHICS ECOLOGICAL
PROBLEMS AND SYRO-MALABAR QURBANA

Paulachan Kochappilly CMI

MAR APREM : PATRON OF ECO-THEOLOGY

Paulose Pottampuzha CMI

NEWS

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Editorial

Cosmic harmony was the mark of creation as we understand it from the creation narrative of the Bible. Everything lived and moved in perfect harmony with each other, with the Creator and with its own nature. "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good" (*Gen 1,31*).

Man is the crown of creation:

"God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them: Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild beasts that move upon earth... I have given every green herb for food; and it was so" (*Gen 1,27-30*).

Hence human sin, the disobedience of man, turned everything upside down: all kinds of disorders crept into the creation; Adam and Eve knew "that they were naked"; they "hid themselves from the presence of the Lord"; Eve was condemned to 'bear and bring forth children in pain'; Adam was left to the mercy of the situation; he was to till the earth and search for his livelihood; in the sweat of his face he was to eat his bread; the earth was to bring forth thistles and thorns for them; as they were taken from the dust, they were to return to the dust; and so on. Thus the creation was thrown into utter confusion and disharmony.

In the fullness of time, there came the Son of God as son of man; in him humanity was allowed to touch and taste the divinity; in him humankind was invited to become divine. His "passover"-Resurrection - was a re-creation: everything was brought back to the original purity; cosmic balance and harmony were restored. Christianity being the continuation of the Risen Lord, it is a religion of cosmic harmony and balance. Thus it always emphasises the human relatedness to nature, neighbour and God in its authentic life-style. Christian spirituality being an experience of God in the Risen Lord Jesus Christ, it is obviously rooted in cosmic harmony and balance.

Ecology, though a new field of research for modern man, its Christian expressions as 'eco-theology' and 'eco-spirituality' were of great concern for Christianity from the very beginning of its existence. The early fathers were all explaining sufficiently and beautifully this Christian world vision. In this

issue of *Christian Orient* there is a very good example for that: *Mar Aprem: Patron of Eco-Theology*. Mar Aprem was, in fact, a lover of nature and nature for him is a sacrament of divine action. This article is an abstract of the B. Th. dissertation submitted in Dharmaram Vidya Kshetram, Bangalore, by Rev. Fr. Paulose Pottampuzha CMI, who is at present an active missionary in Gujrat.

Celebrative Ethics: Ecological Problems and Syro-Malabar Qurbana is yet another attempt to discuss the ecological problems in the context of the Syro-Malabar *Qurbana*. Rev. Fr. Paulachan Kochappilly CMI is a doctoral research student in the "Accademia Alfonsiana", the Pontifical Institute of Moral Theology, in Rome. The present article is the abstract of his dissertation submitted in the Institute for his master's degree in Moral Theology. The author tries to bring out the intimate relation that exists between Liturgy and Morality, in the context of the Eucharistic Celebration of the Syro-Malabar Church, and points to the contribution of Christian worship to the cosmic harmony, which is also the heart of Christian spirituality.

Rev. Dr. Sebastian Athappilly CMI, who is well-known to the readers of *Christian Orient* through several of his inspiring articles, presents this time a study of the theological anthropology as it is expressed in the Syro-Malabar *Qurbana* text: *The Theological Anthropology of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana*. The study of man in the light of Christian revelation and faith was always a favourite topic for theologians. Fr. Sebastian draws clearly the sublime picture of humans presented in the *Qurbana* text. In this context, he refers also to ecology – the relatedness of man to God and world – as it is confessed through the *Qurbana* text.

As a whole this issue of *Christian Orient* concentrates on ecology, a current topic of universal interest, against the background of the East Syriac or Chaldaic liturgical tradition.

Finally, I would like to place on record my most sincere thanks first to the contributors and then to everyone who has collaborated with me in one way or other for bringing this issue of *Christian Orient* to the readers. May God bless us all.

Dharmaram College, Bangalore,
September 8, 1995
The Nativity of *Iso' – Matha'*.

Varghese Pathikulangara CMI
Editor

The Theological Anthropology of the Syro-Malabar Qurbana

1) Introduction

This article is a modest attempt to focus and reflect on some of the significant traits and elements of the theological anthropology in the Syro-Malabar Eucharistic Liturgy, the *Qurbana*, in the hope that someone would later develop the theme more deeply and systematically. As the basis of this study we take the English text of the *Order for the Solemn Raza of the Syro-Malabar Church*.¹ In general it can be rightly said that its anthropology is intertwined with its Theology, Christo-logy, Pneumato-logy, theology of the Trinity, soteriology and cosmology.

2) The Vision in a Nutshell

We would like to begin our considerations starting from the *end* of the Text. Such a beginning "from right to left" is not chosen artificially to suit the Semitic nature of the Liturgy (!), but for thematic reasons. Let us thus focus on the final blessing, the *huttama*. There are three forms of this prayer, one for Sundays and feast days, while the other two are meant for ferial days.

The final blessing on Sundays begins with the confession to God that He has "blessed us with all the spiritual gifts in heaven through our Lord Jesus Christ" (p. 68). Here we have in a nutshell the whole anthro-

pology of the *Qurbana*, showing its essential relationship with the Trinity. For the prayer contains three important elements in it, namely, a) it acknowledges the function of the Father as the one who is the source and initiator of the salvific action for our sake: He is the agent, it is He who has blessed us; b) it confesses the *mediatory* role of Christ: the salvation (spiritual gifts) which God works in us, He does it *through* Jesus Christ; c) it sees the salvific deed of God in giving us the spiritual gifts which are same as the gifts of the Spirit and the Spirit Himself. The most precious gift of God is primarily the Self-Gift which is his own Spirit; that is why Jesus tells us: "If you... know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Lk 11, 13; cf. Gal. 3, 14). The confession that God has blessed us with all spiritual gifts through Christ, refers thus to his redemptive work that has resulted in the outpouring of the Spirit for all, as had been foretold in Joel 2, 28. On the day of Pentecost the apostles were thus inspired by the Spirit whom Jesus poured out on them (cf. Acts 2, 33).

The prayer continues then with a narration of what Christ on his part has done for us: he has invited us to his kingdom and called us to his glory. He has called us to a happiness that

1. Published from Ernakulam and Changanacherry in 1986. References to it will be made with page numbers within brackets.

neither passes away, nor ceases. This conviction, according to the prayer, is based on his promise in connection with his teaching on the Bread of Life (Jn 6, 54-56).

The second part of the prayer is the request for a blessing upon the assembly. There it is mentioned that the people have been made happy by the participation in the mysteries of Christ. This actually reflects the Syro-Malabar understanding of an active participation in the Sacrament which makes each member happy. The *Qurbana* is a joyful celebration of Christ's mysteries. The prayer concludes with the invocation and wish that the participants "be marked with the sign of the Lord's cross and be saved from all deceits open and hidden". The blessing ends with the signing of the cross over the assembly. The Cross is accepted as the shield that protects man from all sorts of dangers, internal as well as external. Here man's spiritual, mental and bodily dimensions are taken into account.

A form of the final blessing on week days mentions our future joy with the angels on the one hand and the request for Christ's mercy and grace upon the whole world on the other. This suggests again the implied holistic vision of the Syro-Malabar Liturgy.

The second form of the final blessing contains praise to Christ for pardoning our offences by his Body and blotting out our sins by his Blood. This summarily expresses the whole of Christ's atoning work for us. The blessing addresses the people as "the sheep of his flock", upon whom the priest invokes mercy and grace, and the protecting right hand of providence. The relationship between Christ and the people is here beautifully expressed in the model of shepherd and sheep, a biblical image (cf. Jn 10, 1-18).

This idea appears also in the celebrant's prayers before the anthem of the sanctuary said on Sundays and feast days ("we, your people, and the sheep of your pasture" (p. 12) and in the prayer of blessing over the censer ("obtain remission of the debts of your flock" (p. 14). In the rite of reconciliation we find the theme again during the incensing. The prayer addresses God as "good shepherd who set out to seek us and found us when we were lost" (p. 52). In all the three places it is the whole Trinity who is understood as the Shepherd.

In the conception of God as the Shepherd and the people as the sheep, we have the picture of a community that shares the same lot under the one leadership and guidance of the shepherd. All are equal in dignity and value. Here the principle of solidarity is expressed in a concrete and pictorial way. It is precisely on the basis of this communitarian understanding that in concelebrations *only one priest* recites the prayers at a time—either the main celebrant or one of the concelebrants. One man's prayer is considered to be that of the whole community; he prays on behalf of the whole community. This is clearly stated in the people's prayer in response to the celebrant's request before the third *g'hantha*, before the words of Institution. The people respond thus: "May Christ...be pleased in this sacrifice which you offer...on our behalf and on behalf of the whole world" (p. 46). That is also the reason why even in concelebrations the main celebrant requests the prayer of the community for himself (*in the singular*); here he is acting on behalf of all the priests. This principle of representation is a very basic principle of Christian faith. The reason for the principle is the very family bond that relates and unites each member with all and one another. Without such a relationship we would not share in the redemptive

work of Christ, the Second Adam. It is against the background of this understanding that St Paul dwells on the effect of the one man's obedience upon the whole humanity (Rom. 5, 15-19).

3) Holistic Vision

The *Qurbana* contains a holistic and integral vision that is expressed at various levels and realms as follows.

a) Cosmological

At the cosmological the holistic vision is manifested in the prayers which envisage the worshipping community as comprising angels and human beings. The Lord's Prayer as recited at the very beginning (p. 6) and towards the end (p. 67) brings it out by mentioning that the angels and men join in glorifying God, crying out to Him: holy, holy, holy. In the Prayer before the anthem of the sanctuary we find this mentioned on Sundays and feast days in the following words: "We, your people, ... with thousands of cherubim who sing 'alleluia', to you and tens of thousands of seraphim and archangels who sing to you 'holy', kneel ... and glorify you" (p. 12). On the Feasts of our Lord the prayer runs as follows: "Before the awesome bema of your majesty, and sublime throne of your divinity, ... where the cherubim ... sing alleluia to you unceasingly, and the seraphim glorify you singing 'holy' incessantly; we kneel in fear and worship in awe" (pp. 12-13). In the Anthem (Hymn) of the Mysteries during the Transfer of the Gifts the faithful sing: "The body of Christ and his precious Blood are on the holy altar. Let us all approach Him with reverence and love, ... and ... sing his praises with the angels: Holy, holy, holy, Lord God" (p. 35). Again in the celebrant's prayer (*kussapa*) immediately before the Anaphora we have the request to the Lord Jesus Christ to make us

worthy to sing his praises "with the hosts of angels" (p. 41). It is precisely against the backdrop of such an understanding that the celebrant repeats the words of the prophet Isaiah from his vision of the throne of God (Is. 6, 5): "Woe to me, for I am dismayed because ... my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts ... O Lord ... sanctify our lips and mingle ... the voices of our feebleness with the hallowing of the seraphim and of archangels" (p. 46). Then the priest continues: "And with these heavenly hosts we give you thanks, O Lord" (p. 46). This opening verse of the *g'hantha* just before the words of Institution points out the basic idea of our participation in a heavenly Liturgy already on earth. This is very clearly brought out in the prayer of the faithful after the Elevation of the Host (in the rite of Fraction and Consignation), where they respond to the celebrant's doxology as follows: "His ministers who do his will, the Cherubim, the Seraphim and the archangels, stand with reverence and awe before the altar and watch the priest who breaks the Body of Christ" (p. 54). This idea that also the angels are involved in our liturgy, is a beautiful example of the harmonious vision of the Syro-Malabar Liturgy. Similarly, the people's prayer after Holy Communion shows how much the Liturgy allows room for the angels in its world vision. The prayer is addressed to Christ in order that he may make us all worthy to meet him with confidence at his manifestation, and to offer him praise with the host of angels (p. 66). The final blessing by the priest on ferial days reflects the same prayer. The blessing begins with the prayer to our Lord Jesus Christ that he may "make us worthy of the magnificent glory of his kingdom ... with his holy angels" (p. 69). The idea that we really participate in the earthly Liturgy along with the angels is further mentioned in the celebrant's prayer on Sundays and Feast days

after the Communion. The Lord is thanked for having made our weak nature worthy to "bless his name with the angels" (p. 67). Further, the arrangement of the inner space of the church with sanctuary, nave and *bema*, signifying the heaven, earth and Golgotha respectively, is a non-verbal expression of the comprehensive vision.

The foregoing illustrations express the broad and integral outlook of the Syro-Malabar Liturgy and its understanding of God's creation as constituting a unity and solidarity. There may be some today who deny the existence of angels, although Holy Scriptures and the tradition of the Church teach it. Our point *here* is not primarily to defend the reality of angels or any other spiritual beings, but rather to demonstrate the Syro-Malabar liturgical and theological vision of the *unity* of the whole world, incorporating and involving also the angelic order of which the First Vatican Council speaks in its teaching on creation in the dogmatic constitution *Dei Filius* (DS 3002 = ND 412). Since the whole universe is created by the one triune God, everything-material or spiritual - has a certain unity of origin. With regard to the goal also we can say that there is a bond between them, since the last end (ultimate finality) of the created world is God himself. Correspondingly, to speak of a unity also on the level of history is not at all out of place, but rather warranted and justifiable. The Bible provides ample evidence of such a vision in its understanding of the history of salvation. Teilhard de Chardin² and Karl Rahner³ have developed an anthropology and a Christology based on this biblical and theological vision of the unity of all creation.

The solidarity also includes, of course, the union "with all the saints" in heaven. This is expressed in the celebrant's prayers before Holy Communion for the grace "that we, being united to the Body and Blood of ... Christ may, together with all the saints, shine brightly at his great and glorious manifestation", and for the grace of bringing forth fruits of glory to God "with all the saints" in his kingdom (p. 58). Similarly, the celebrant's prayers after Communion speak of our praising and glorifying Christ "in company of the just"/"in company with the just" who do and fulfil his will, and with the thief in paradise (p. 64). Here we have the vision of a community comprised of men here on earth, saints and angels in heaven, all united in the worship of God.

b) Soteriological

The integral vision of the *Qurbana* is manifested also at the soteriological level. Salvation is viewed as affecting man in all his dimensions and pertaining to various aspects of his life in the world.

The salvation worked by Christ is the sanctification of the *whole* man, spirit, mind and body. This holistic view of man with spiritual and bodily dimensions is reflected in many prayers of the *Qurbana*. The *turgama* of the gospel is an excellent illustration of this. To cite just one passage where we find a brief summary of Christ's redemptive work: "He healed the sick; raised the dead; cast out devils and repudiated death" (p. 24, no. 13). The third *g'hantha* while mentioning the Incarnation of the Word makes it explicit that "he became man perfect with a rational... soul and with a mortal human body" (p. 47). Again

2. Cf. *Phenomenon of Man*, London, 1960, pp. 53-74.

3. K. Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith. An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*, London, 1978, (hereafter: *Foundations*), pp. 181-183.

in the prayer of Prostration the choir and the priest sing that "the Spirit descends from above and sanctifies the Body and Blood of Christ" (p. 33). After the initial prayer of "Our Father" the celebrant prays on the Feast days of our Lord to strengthen the believers that "they may administer the propitiatory mysteries which sanctify their souls and bodies" (p. 7). The people's prayer after the Holy Communion on the feast days of our Lord includes the request to him as follows: "Renew the bodies which have eaten your living Body unto new life" (p. 65). In fact the whole prayer speaks of the hands, lips, ears, eyes, tongues, feet and finally the body which have participated in the sacrifice in their own ways. Similarly, the introductory prayer before the second "Our Father" speaks of tongues, countenance, mouths and lips (p. 59).

In the Hymn to the Risen Lord it is confessed that we praise and glorify him, for he gives life to our bodies and salvation to our souls (p. 15). Similarly, the celebrant's prayer before the epistle on Sundays and feast days contains the following request: "Grant us... that we may gather... the fruits of love and hope and salvation which are beneficial to the soul and the body" (p. 19).

The celebrant's prayer before taking the gospel from the altar reflects the body-mind scheme in a similar manner alluding to the work of Christ as our saviour. As a brief narration of his salvific deed it is a confession of the holistic understanding of man and salvation. The prayer runs as follows: "O Christ,... you did manifest yourself in a human body like ours and did illumine the darkness of our mind by the light of your gospel" (p. 22). In the already mentioned *turgama* of the gospel the deacons

invite the believers to "come and listen to the words that heal the body and give life to the soul" (p. 23). Recently in the light of a resurgence of the biblical holistic vision of man healing and health are considered as an important aspect of salvation.⁴ The mention of bodily health along with the life of the souls is a significant expression of the implied holistic anthropology of the Syro-Malabar *Qurbana*. This is also made explicit in the first *karozutha* where the deacon prays for the health of the Pope, and in the celebrant's *kussapa* "for all those who mourn and are in distress, for all the poor and the oppressed, for all the sick and afflicted" (p. 49). The celebrant's prayer after Holy Communion reflects the same holistic vision which sees man also in his *bodily* dimension, here in this case, with regard to damnation. The prayer is addressed to Christ not to let his Body and Blood "turn into our judgement and condemnation, nor into our weakness and infirmity" (p. 64). The implication of the latter part is too clear, namely, an unworthy Communion can adversely affect the soul *and* the body (cf. 1 Cor. 11, 27-30).

The deacon's *karozutha* prayers "for a temperate climate, for a good harvest and an abundance of fruits, and for the prosperity of the whole world" (p. 27) and "for the peace, harmony and stability of the whole world and of all churches" (p. 26) are yet other examples of the holistic concern. Similar concern is expressed in the Diptychs where the deacon prays also "for our life and for the peace of the world, and for the crowning of the year that it may be blessed and filled with abundance" (p. 43). Against this holistic background there is also a meaning and significance for "fasting, prayer and contrition of

4. Cf. *Interpretation*, 49/2 (April 1995). The whole issue is on "Salvation and Healing."

heart" (p. 37) in order to please Christ and his Father and his Spirit. The imagery of the "salutary feast of the royal banquet" (p. 20) and of our being "the guests" (p. 61) at this banquet of the "heavenly bridegroom" reflects the bodily and social aspects of salvation. The material (corporeal) and spiritual aspects of man are further reflected in the deacon's instruction to raise the *voices* and praise the living God (p. 16). Man is to worship God in body and mind. The mention of rendering priestly ministry "with hearts and minds" (p. 7) shows yet another dimension of the holistic vision about man, for he is seen from both the emotional and rational aspects.

Also the celebrant's prayer in the beginning of the rite of Fraction and Consignation contains an element of the integration of the secular and spiritual aspects in that he prays for unity (reconciliation) of "the priesthood with the kingship" (p. 51).

Corresponding to the age-old Indian prayer for a salvation that consists in being led from unreality to reality, from darkness to light, and from death to immortality, we have in the Liturgy an *acknowledgement*⁵ of salvation that has been effected already by Christ at all these levels. Thus we find the deacon praying after the rite of Fraction and Consignation calling to mind that Christ has by his life-giving laws and by his holy precepts "led us from error into the knowledge of truth" (p. 56). The phrase "knowledge of truth" has a reference to the NT texts of 1 Tim. 2,4 and Hb. 10,26, where it means the truth of Christ (*epignosis*) as opposed to the merely philosophical knowledge (*gnosis*) of the Gnostics. As the prayer of the above mentioned *karozutha* mentions,

we have been led not simply to a truth that is impersonal, but to the salvific and *personal* truth that is Christ himself. Similarly, as an aspect of salvation is described the illuminating of "the darkness of our mind by the light of the gospel" by Christ who is "light of the world and life of all" (p. 22). In the *turgama* of the gospel, the choir sings that the Son of God liberated us from sin (p. 23). The idea of salvation in terms of passing "from death to everlasting life" is contained in the already mentioned final blessing on Sundays in connection with the promise of Christ (p. 68). This appears in the prayer of the celebrant immediately before the elevation (p. 53) and in the people's response to it (p. 54). All these various dimensions of salvation are also reflected in the celebrant's prayer immediately after the words of Institution. It is an example of a vivid and touching narration of the great favours done to us by Christ. It acknowledges gratefully that Christ has vivified our humanity by his divinity, raised us who were fallen, led us from mortality to immortality, forgiven our debts, brought us justification, enlightened our knowledge, condemned our enemies, and granted victory to our weak nature (p. 48).

The acknowledgement of the weak nature of man is a recurrent theme in the *Qurbana*. On Sundays and feast days the celebrant's prayer of imposition at the beginning of the rite of dismissal includes the humble recognition: "In your mercy, O my Lord, you have rendered us, in spite of the littleness of our weak nature, worthy to become recognized members in the great body of the holy Catholic Church" (p. 31). Similarly, in the beginning of the Anaphora of Mar Addai and Mar Mari the opening prayer of the first *g'hantha* contains the grateful words

5. The difference is of special importance, namely, in contrast to the Indian prayer Christian faith sees salvation as already objectively achieved in the Christ-event. Hence the grateful acknowledgement.

addressed to God: "For though we are sinful and weak, through your mercy you have made us worthy to be ministers of the Body and Blood of your Christ" (p. 42). Mention of human weakness is made again in the Anaphora in the celebrant's prayer after the rite of peace-giving (p. 43) and in the concluding part of the fourth *g'hantha* (p. 50). The prayer before the final blessing on Sundays and feast days thanks God for making our weak nature worthy to bless his name with the angels (p. 67).

c) Ecclesiological

We see another element of a holistic vision in the *Qurbana* in its vision of the Church. In the celebrant's prayers immediately before the "Hymn to the risen Lord" and after the *Epiclesis* (Invocation of the Holy Spirit) the Church is presented as the privileged and suitable "place" where we can thank and glorify God (pp. 15,51). Here the societal (social) dimension of man is taken into consideration. We are primarily a family, whom God has called together in the Holy Spirit and with whom God has made the covenant with the Blood of His Son. As individuals we are not able to give God the due worship and glory. Rather we do it as a community, i. e. in the church. Liturgy is the *communitarian* celebration⁶ and hence the prayers reflect this communitarian aspect. So we have in the restored text of the Liturgy the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed in the place of the so-called Apostolic Creed (which was an *individual* confession of faith in the Roman Rite on the occasion of one's baptism).

Precisely because of the ecclesial character of the Liturgy, it has also

an ecclesiastical character. It is in the name of the Church and by power of ordination by a bishop that a priest is authorised to officiate at the liturgy as the bishop's vicar (representative). This important truth about Liturgy is brought to light with the concept of *appointment* concerning priesthood, as is stated in the prayer of the priest after the Consignation in the following words: "Glory to you, O our Lord Jesus Christ, for though I am unworthy you have in your grace appointed me a minister and mediator of your holy... and divine mysteries" (p. 56). This means that there is no self-appointed priesthood, but only that which is conferred and appointed by a higher authority. This is referred to in the prayer of imposition on Sundays and feast days in the words: "And through the grace of the Holy Spirit... are conferred, by the imposition of hands, the orders of priesthood" (p. 31). The imposition of hands clearly refers to the sacrament of order administered by the bishop. Hence the priest is not expected to use the liturgy or the sacraments as the playground of his private piety and theology, ignoring or discarding the instructions given by legitimate ecclesiastical authority⁷.

It is also significant to note that the prayer of imposition mentions towards the end "this people you have chosen for yourself" (p. 31). This refers to the common priesthood of the people as is taught in 1 Pt 2,9 where the text speaks of the faithful as "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people". This is a reason why they are considered holy as is suggested in the celebrant's proclamation just before the Holy Communion: "The Holy things to the holy" (p. 60). It is indeed

6. V. Pathikulangara, *Liturgy-Experience*, Kottayam, 1995, p. 26.

7. Regarding the role of the *Magisterium* in liturgical matters cf. the Apostolic Letter *Dominicae Cenae* of Pope John Paul II. For a summary of the relevant points here, cf. V. Pathikulangara, *Liturgy-Experience*, op. cit., pp. 88ff.

fitting that the prayer of imposition, after mentioning about the ministerial priesthood, also thinks of the people as sharing in and endowed with the priesthood of Christ by virtue of their baptism (cf. LG 31,33). Such an outlook concerning the faithful as priests and God's chosen ones had also its practical and healthy impact on the original Ecclesiology of the Syro-Malabar Church. They had, till the arrival of the Portuguese the system of the parish assembly (*palliyogam*⁸) which was entitled to take decisions regarding important matters concerning parish administration, selection of candidates to priesthood, etc. It is hoped that the proposed particular statutes of the Syro-Malabar Church in light of the Code of Canons of the Eastern Churches (1990) envisage the full restoration of the traditional system of the parish assembly with due rights to the laity, as it had been in the traditions of the Thomas Christians.

The *Amen* of the Congregation in response to the words of Institution spoken by the priest has to be understood in the light of the common priesthood of all the faithful; it also suggests very poignantly the community's active involvement in the whole celebration. It implies that the priest is not *the* or sole celebrant of the *Qurbana*; he is the official representative and so the leader of the congregation. He is acting *on behalf* of the people as is explicitly mentioned in the prayer of the congregation as well as that of the deacon: "May Christ...

be pleased in this sacrifice which you offer on your behalf, on our behalf and on behalf of the whole world" (pp. 46,49). His status is not essentially different from that of the others, although he is indelibly marked with and set apart for ministerial priesthood by virtue of his ordination. The oneness of the priest with the people is symbolically expressed also in that the priest stands in the *same* direction as the people, facing the East. This is a sign of the truth that all of us – the priest as well as the people – are heading towards the heavenly Jerusalem and looking forward to the glorious second coming (parousia) of Christ who is the Sun of the whole world. This anticipatory awaiting is referred to in the prayer of the Presentation of the Gifts (p. 37: "until his glorious second coming from heaven"). Traditionally the churches of the Thomas Christians were hence built in the Eastward position⁹.

In this connection may it be pointed out that it is an age old practice in India to recite the *Gayatri mantra*, facing the East, looking at the rising sun. It seems very curious and at the same time inconsistent that some of the advocates of inculturation are much allergic or/and opposed to retaining this Indian and Oriental practice of facing the East in the Syro-Malabar Liturgy! Some would reserve this to the people alone and plead for the position of the priest facing them *always*. Does this not smack of an inherent clericalism and promote a certain inferiority or superiority complex among the faithful

8. Cf. X. Koodapuzha, *Bharatha Sabha Charitram* (History of the Indian Church), Vadavathoor, 1989 (2nd ed.), (OIRS1 no. 131), pp. 26 f., 179, 196, 198 etc.; P. J. Podipara, *The Thomas Christians*, Bombay, 1970, pp. 96f.; A. M. Mundadan, *Traditions of the St. Thomas Christians*, Dharmaram, Bangalore, 1970, pp. 125, 154.

9. Cf. T. Elavanal, *The Memorial Celebration. A Theological Study of the Anaphora of the Apostles Mar Addai and Mari*, Alwaye, 1989, p. 22; V. Pathikulangara, *Liturgy-Experience*, op. cit., pp. 98f.

and clerics respectively? The pilgrim character of the church and the basic equality of the clergy with the people are at any rate better symbolized by the traditional position and posture of the priest and people than by any other model.

The priest is not (and also does not feel himself) holier than the people, and hence he requests prayers for himself from them that he may be able to complete the sacrifice (pp. 41, 46). The role of the priest is seen as mediating remission and reconciliation as we find in the prayer by the priest while he approaches the altar for the Anaphora (p. 40). This idea is implied in the prayer of imposition where the priest prays to the Lord to perfect his grace in him and the other celebrant priests and to pour forth his gifts *through* their hands (p. 31).

The notion of mediation and mediatorship is a theme running through the whole biblical tradition. "Salvation in History through Mediators" was the basic faith experience of the people of Israel, who were led and guided by Yahweh through the Fathers, Prophets and Kings as mediators selected and appointed by Him. Although the power of such salvific mediation is due to the work of God's Spirit, God makes use of a human being as his personal instrument for mediating His message and work. Actually every activity of God is mediated through secondary causes, to use a scholastic expression. To expect everything directly or immediately from God, is to ignore the theological, anthropological and theological-anthropological truths and principles.

Another implication of the communitarian nature of the Liturgy is contained in the different roles played by the celebrant, congregation, choir and deacon, each having to recite definite prayers and do certain rites.

4) Trinitarian Vision

The theological anthropology of the Syro-Malabar *Qurbana* is manifested especially in its view of the relationship of God with us. We find this at two levels, at the level of the Trinity as a *whole* and that of *each* Person of the Trinity.

a) The Trinity and Humankind

The fundamental relationship between the Triune God and us is that between the Creator and creatures. Besides in the creed this is also confessed in the celebrant's prayer in the second *g'hantha* in the following words: "Worthy of praise from every mouth... and of worship and exaltation from every creature is the adorable and glorious name of your blessed Trinity,... who created the world by your grace and its inhabitants by your mercifulness" (p. 45). The wonder of God's love is that He, the supreme Author and Creator, accepts his creatures as his beloved partners. The concluding prayer after the *Trisagion* expresses this salvific experience of the Triune God as of the One who dwells in the holy ones and is well pleased in them (p. 17). This mystical notion of the indwelling presence of God in human beings is a sublime element in New Testament anthropology as is revealed in the words of our Lord: "I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Counsellor, to be with you for ever, even the Spirit of truth...; you know him, for he dwells with you, and will be in you... If a man loves me, ... my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him" (Jn 14, 15-17, 23). The Pauline understanding of man as the temple of God reflects the same idea (1 Cor. 3, 16; 2 Cor. 6, 16; cf. Rom. 8, 10-11). It is this biblical vision that is reflected in the celebrant's prayer during the deacon's *karozutha* before Holy Communion. The prayer is made so that we may be "pure

sanctuaries" in God's honour and "holy temples" fit for his habitation (p. 58).

The corresponding sentiments evoked in us by God's great deeds of love and mercy are those of inexpressible gratitude and worship. The following prayers illustrate this. After the psalmody the celebrant prays on days of commemoration: "We are bound at all times, to thank, adore and glorify the... blessed and incomprehensible name of your glorious Trinity and your goodness towards mankind" (p. 13); after the incensing he prays: "For every help and grace that you have given us, for which we can never repay you enough, may we thank you and glorify you unceasingly in your Church" (p. 15). The prayer immediately after the words of Institution brings out the same idea as it recalls and recognizes the "great favours which cannot be repaid" (pp. 47-48).

God's intimate relationship with us in the form of indwelling presence in us is complemented by His presence with us. We find this in the Anthem of the Mysteries during the Transfer and Presentation of the Gifts. In response to the celebrant's prayer the congregation says: "The Mighty Lord is with us; Our King is with us; Our God is with us" (p. 36). Here we recall the profound mystery of the Incarnation by which the Son of God tabernacled or pitched his tent among us (Jn 1, 14) and became God with us, Amman-Amman-hu-El (Mt 1, 23).

The second part of the prayer after the *Trisagion* and the prayer before the Epistle on ferial days and Sundays in Lent acknowledge the Triune God as one who is wont to pardon us at all times (p. 19). Here is a picture of God as merciful by nature. Correspondingly, we have in the Liturgy the recurring and confidential prayers for mercy and forgiveness. For example, the prayer of

the priest during the Great Intercessory Prayer (*Kussapa*) after the words of Institution runs as follows: "O our Lord and our God, deal with your people and with me according to your mercies and the abundance of goodness and not according to my sins and transgressions" (p. 49). This firm faith in God's mercy gives us confidence to approach and address Him as our Father, as is suggested in the invitation to recite the Lord's prayer (p. 59).

God is further seen as a wise ruler who marvellously cares for his household (p. 19); this reflects the Pauline understanding that we are "fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (Eph. 2, 19), and children and heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ (Rom. 8, 16-17). It is because of this familial relationship that the faithful receive the Holy Communion, *standing*, instead of kneeling down as in some other Rites. Also as members of God's household (besides being the chosen people and royal priesthood), the faithful are called holy. Hence the words of invitation by the priest in view of Holy Communion: "The Holy Things to the holy, O Lord" (p. 60).

b) Relationship of each Divine Person with us

i) *The Father and us*

The *Qurbana* gratefully recounts the love and mercy of God the Father. He "did not deal with us according to our sins", but in his mercy "delivered us from the power of darkness and invited us into the kingdom of...our Lord Jesus Christ", his well beloved Son (p. 58). Before taking the gospel from the altar the celebrant recalls this mercy of the Father in the following words: "O Christ, light of the world and life of all, Glory to the Eternal Mercy which sent you to us, for ever. Amen" (p. 22). This is also mentioned in the fourth *g'hantha* (p. 50). This prayer also bears witness to the

sincere longing to spread to all the inhabitants of the earth the truth that it is He who is the true God, the Father, and that He has sent our Lord Jesus Christ, His beloved Son, Through him He "disarmed and destroyed the power of death and...bestowed upon us life eternal and incorruptible" (p. 58). As has already been mentioned at the very outset, the final blessing on Sundays and feast days starts with the confession that He has "blessed us with all the spiritual gifts through our Lord, Jesus Christ" (p. 68). These ideas are in accordance with biblical theology regarding the role of the Father as the initiator and the ultimate agent of our salvation as is shown for instance in Jn 3,16: "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him...should have eternal life", and in 2 Cor. 5,18f: "God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself"; "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself".

ii) *The Son and us:*

The *Qurbana* contains numerous prayers referring to our relationship with the Son. In fact, they are the dominant themes next to those related to the Trinity in general.

The very opening verse of the Liturgy makes a reference to "the command of Christ" which serves as the reason and justification for the whole celebration (p. 5). This idea of Christ's command "to celebrate the memory of His passion, death, burial and resurrection" comes again at the Presentation of the Gifts (p. 37). Immediately after the initial prayer of "Our Father" the celebrant's prayer on Sundays and feast days confesses two important points, namely, that the sacred mysteries are given "through

the mercy of your [= God's] beloved Son" and that its purpose is the "renewal and salvation of mankind" (p. 7). The liturgy is thus not simply *any* celebration which we perform at the command of Christ, but *the* celebration of his sacred mysteries given by himself. It is he who in his grace appoints the priests as ministers and mediators of his holy, life-giving and divine mysteries (p. 56). Regarding the purpose of the Mysteries we may note here the implied message of the *restoration* of the image impaired due to human sin. The salvation achieved by Christ consists in renewing the Divine image in man, and this is based on two correlated facts and premises: i) Christ himself is *the* perfect image of God¹⁰, and ii) man is created with an inherent dynamism to grow into the perfection of the Divine image which is planted in him as a seed and promise. This Godward (upward) thrust of man being lost on account of sin, redemption consists in *renewing* him and so bringing him salvation. We find this vision also pointing to the intrinsic relationship between Christ and man (human nature). Here we perceive the relationship of unity between Christology, Anthropology and Theology. In this context we may recall that according to K. Rahner "Christology is the beginning and end of Anthropology" and this Anthropology, in its most radical actualization, is Theology.¹¹

The whole Christ event is thus essentially related to man and his salvation, which sufficiently substantiates the relationship between the Son and us. This is, for instance, referred to in the prayer of imposition (on Sundays and feast days) in the words that we the sheep of God's flock were redeemed by the "great passion" of

10. For a detailed study on this theme cf. S. Athappilly, "Jesus Christ the Image of the Father", *Christian Orient*, vol. XII (1991), pp. 107-127.

11. K. Rahner, *Foundations*, p. 225.

His Christ (p. 31). We are also viewed as the sheep of Jesus' fold and hence the prayer for protection and for the right hand of mercy to overshadow us (p. 34). So too the prayer at the Transfer of the Gifts mentions the salvific sacrifice of Christ thus: "May Christ who was sacrificed for our salvation...accept this sacrifice" (p. 37). In this prayer we have also the picture of a community that awaits the second coming of the Lord. In view of this "day of judgement", the celebrant hopes to come before Christ "with confidence", for by his grace he has made him worthy of his Body and Blood (p. 44).

Christ is further addressed as the "peace of those in heaven above and great hope of those on earth below" in the opening prayer of the rite of Fraction and Consignation (p. 51). And so the prayer continues for peace and tranquility in the world and in the Church. The idea that he is our peace and hope conveys the truth that it is he who can mediate to us peace (rest) of heart by leading us to the Father (cf. Jn 14,6). Our hearts are in a salutary unrest until and so that we find rest and peace in the Lord.¹² Those in heaven have found it in Christ and those on the earth have the hope for the same in him. The celebrant's prayers immediately after Holy Communion (during the purification of the chalice) address him hence with the words; "O Christ, hope of mankind" (p. 64).

The idea that we are creatures comes also with regard to our relationship to Christ, the Son. This is recalled by the deacons at the end of the prostrations before the Anthem of the Mysteries. It acknowledges to the Lord Jesus that we are the work of his hands (p. 34). Similarly, the celebrant's prayer during the Thrice-holy Hymn

(*Sanctus*) confesses that all things were made through him (p. 46). This is an implicit confession of Jesus' divinity, which is also explicitly confessed in different contexts. As noted above, the Hymn of the Mysteries, for instance, calls him Lord God and praises him with the angels: Holy, holy, holy (p. 35). The third *g'hantha* before the words of Institution (p. 46) and the people's prayer after Holy Communion on the feast days of our Lord (p. 65) speak about "God the Word" and his "divinity" respectively. The priest's prayer after Communion on Sundays and feast days speaks of Christ as "our God, our Lord" (p. 67), reminding us of the confession and Resurrection-experience of St Thomas (cf. Jn 20, 28). While the mention of Christ as the creator takes us to our origin (Protology), we have in the Hymn to the Risen Lord the acclamation that refers to Christ's redemptive work to be accomplished in us at the end (Eschatology), in the resurrection of our bodies and salvation of our souls (pp. 15f.). Those who are dead have their hope in Christ that he will through his glorious resurrection raise them up again in glory (pp. 36-37). The concluding prayer of the Hymn confesses further that he is also the "constant preserver of our lives" (p. 16). That is to say, Christ is acknowledged not only as the *creator* (past), *saviour* (future), but also as the *preserver* (present) of our lives. In another context he is acclaimed as "the Giver of life" (p. 62).

Referring to Christ's Incarnation and public ministry of announcing the Good News, the celebrant prays as he approaches the altar to take the gospel: "O Christ, ... you did manifest yourself in a human body like ours and did illumine the darkness of our mind by the light of the gospel" (p. 22). The words speaking of the

12. Cf. St. Augustine, *Confessions*, Book I, 1, 1.

manifestation in a "body like ours" serve to express the condescending love of the Son and his solidarity with us and our oneness with him. There arises out of this sharing of our human nature an intimacy with him, which gives us the freedom to call him *nee* in the vernacular (Malayalam), that is used only among friends, peers or with regard to children and persons younger than oneself. Some consider it hence disrespectful to call him so and therefore substitute it with the respectful, but formal term *angu*.

Regarding the relationship of Jesus Christ to the world we find the expression "light of the world and life of all" (p. 22) which is based on the Gospel according to John (cf. Jn 1,4; 8,12; 14,6). Another image that expresses his relationship to us is that of the shepherd and the sheep as is found in the prayer sung by the deacons in the Prostration rite in the *Raza* immediately after the rite of dismissal of the catechumens (cf. p. 34). The *g'hantha* immediately after the words of Institution is a prayer of recounting the "great favours" Christ has done for us, for which we are unable to thank him adequately. The prayer contains an important fragment of the theological anthropology of the *Qurbana*, as it narrates the salvific deeds of Christ. As first is mentioned that he "put on our humanity" in order to vivify it by his divinity (p. 48). This putting on our humanity means the same as his manifestation "in a human body like ours" (p. 22) and his taking the "likeness of a servant" and becoming man (p. 46), as we find in the prayers before the gospel reading and before the words of Institution respectively. The intrinsic affinity between the Logos and

humanity appears once again here.

Besides the faith in the Incarnation the prayer points to the faith regarding its purpose, namely, *deification* or divinization (*theosis*) of man – a dominant and characteristic theme of Eastern Patrology¹³ and Theological Anthropology which has its biblical bases in the creation of man in God's image and likeness (Gen. 1, 26 f.) and in his ultimate finality to participate in the divine nature (2 Pt 1, 4).

At this juncture we may note that it is through the deification of man that the whole world is sanctified and comes to share in Divine salvation. For, man represents and brings the whole cosmos into the Liturgy. Hence the Syro-Malabar Liturgy like other Oriental Liturgies has no place for an "offertory procession" with flowers, fruits, grains etc. as representations of the material universe. Rather, the divinized and sanctified man goes out into the world and transforms it. Further, since liturgy is understood in the Oriental tradition as the sacramental reenactment and commemoration of *God's* self-offering (self-sacrifice and self-gift) to the world, there is no concept of an offering of any other gifts in these liturgies. That is why the people chant during the Transfer and Presentation of the Gifts: "The Body of Christ and his precious Blood are on the altar" (p. 35).

One may wonder why the Gifts are called the Lord's Body and Blood *before* they are sanctified ("consecrated")! This kind of a proleptic or anticipatory vision is reflected also in the prayers at the preparation of the Gifts (pp. 29 f.) as well as those

13. For a study on this cf. G. I. Mantzaridis, *The Deification of Man. St. Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition* (transl. from the Greek by L. Sherrard), Crestwood, N. Y. 1984 Cf. also B. Thorne, *Behold the Man. A therapist's meditation on the Passion of Jesus Christ*, London, 1991, pp. 43-47.

at the subsequent rite of Prostration (p. 33). Here we have the liturgical understanding of *time* in the perspective of God, for whom everything is in the eternal present, which comprises the past and future in one. Liturgical time is thus different from mere secular chronology with its clear cut separation between past, present and future. The preference for the icons (in opposition to the statues), as we find in the Eastern Churches, is another expression of the transcendent outlook, that surpasses a mere realistic vision.

Closely connected with the notion of human divinization we find in the above mentioned *g'hantha* that Christ has "exalted our low state", and granted us immortality. All this is with respect to the *perfecting* dimension of salvation. In view of the *healing* or restoring dimension of salvation wrought by Christ the prayer points out that he has "raised us who are fallen,..... forgiven our debts", made us just who were sinners, enlightened our understanding and triumphed over our enemies (p. 48).

Two ideas about man deserve here our special attention. The idea of divinization presupposes that human nature is positively open for God to share His life, as is indicated in 2 pt. 1, 4. That we are created in the image of God (Gen. 1, 26 f) so that we may grow into His likeness, is the anthropological basis of that. As the consequence of sin this development was blocked in man in his very nature. It is in and by Christ the very image of God that the defect can be overcome and the openness positively fulfilled.

The mention of forgiveness takes us to the fact of sin, as a pre-personal negative situation (original sin) and as deliberate personal act (actual sin). Christ has liberated us from the bondage of these sins by his

forgiveness. Along with this he has overcome death, the wages of sin (Rom. 6, 23), and delivered us from our enemies (the devil and evil powers) who were holding us "captives" as the result of sin. In this context we may also note that the prayer of Our Lord according to the Syro-Malabar Liturgy speaks about delivering us from the evil *one*, according to the right rendering of the term (*min bisa*) used in the *Pshita* (Syriac version), and not simply "from evil" in the abstract. Further, the Lord's Prayer recited a second time (before Holy Communion) is concluded by the priest with a petition to "deliver us from the evil one and his hosts" (p. 60). At the end of the prostrations, before the Anthem of the Mysteries, the deacons also pray similarly to the Lord Jesus: "Do not cast us..... into the hands of the wicked" (p. 34). All this implies and is based on the biblical warning that we are constantly exposed to the attack of satan and demonic powers (1 Pt 5, 8; cf. Eph. 6, 11 f; Lk 22, 31).

Prayer as conversation or dialogue with God, presupposes the sentiment of confidence to approach Him, for we are not only creatures but also sinners before Him. But Christ has given us confidence to call God "Abba, our Father". The introductory prayer to the Lord's Prayer of the "Our Father" mentions this confidence which we have received from him (p. 59). The concluding words of the same introductory prayer are noteworthy. It is mentioned there that when Jesus taught his disciples to pray, he had exhorted them to give *thanks* and say the "Our Father" (p. 59). But we do not find in the gospels any reference to a teaching on thanksgiving in connection with the prayer "Our Father" (cf. Mt 6, 9 and parallel). It would have been, however, Jesus' practice to thank the Father first and then request him, as is suggested in Jn 11,

41 f. (in the prayer at the tomb of Lazarus). The instruction of thanksgiving thus reflects the special way of Jesus' prayer. The *additional* inclusion of this in the context of the Our Father, although it is not literally found in the gospels, reveals the importance given in the Syro-Malabar Liturgy to thanksgiving as corresponding to the Lord's mind-set and teaching. By the way, at least 17 times we come across in the Liturgy the literal mention of thanksgiving, which is now-a-days very much stressed by charismatic movements. The *Qurbana* makes it too clear to be overlooked that we are bound by a relationship of inexpressible gratitude towards God for his immense gifts to us. This is cordially and succinctly acknowledged in the prayer before the Hymn to the Risen Lord (p. 15), the third *g'hanta* after the words of Institution and its concluding doxology (p. 48).

In this connection we also observe that praising and glorifying God is another dominant and closely related feature of the Syro-Malabar Liturgy.¹⁴ There is hardly a page or a prayer that does not contain directly or indirectly the sentiments of praise and gratitude. Over 50 times we find there the concepts of praise and glory explicitly used. This exposes the hollowness and falsehood of the opinion that one has to seek out extra-liturgical forms in order to praise and thank God, as if liturgy contained no such act of praising. At any rate, the assertion is invalid at least in the case of the Syro-Malabar Liturgy, for beginning with the angelic hymn of "Glory to God in the highest", the *Qurbana* is full of doxologies and thank-givings that make it into a *eucharistic* sacrifice.

In fact, thanksgiving and sacrifice are co-related in the sense that the latter is offered as thanksgiving, and the most sublime and highest form of worship and thanksgiving is sacrifice.

The notion that Jesus Christ is "the first fruit of our nature" (p. 56) contains a sublime vision concerning humanity. It implies that it is he who is the prototype of man, the real Man. We are all fashioned in his model and for his sake. As we read in Col. 1, 15-17, he is the first-born of creation and all things were created through him and for him. He is the first-born from the dead, that in everything he may be pre-eminent. As K. Rahner sees it, the very possibility for our existence is grounded in the possibility of God to express himself in the Logos who became incarnate in Jesus the man. Hence humanity exists ultimately in view of Jesus Christ who was God's original thought.¹⁵

iii) *The Holy Spirit and us*

The deacon's instruction after the Communion to thank and glorify God includes a very important reference to the Spirit's activity with regard to us in the liturgy. It expressly states that we have approached the holy altar by the gift of the grace of the Holy Spirit (p. 66). The Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church and it is he who forms us into a body and makes us into a community. As is indicated in the *turgama* of the gospel, it is the Spirit who makes us wise and the bold preachers of the gospel (cf. p. 25). So also it is he who effects in us the virtue of "charity, which is the bond of perfection" (p. 28).

14. For a detailed study on this, cf. T. Elavanal, *The Memorial Celebration*, pp. 73-117; 192-197. The author devotes there a whole and lengthy chapter to the theme under the caption "The Aspect of Praise and Thanksgiving" (in the East Syrian Liturgy).

15. Cf. K. Rahner, *Foundations* pp. 223, 225.

The specific function of the Spirit is confessed in the Liturgy as sanctification. This is made explicit in the celebrant's prayer on the occasion of the Thrice-Holy Hymn (*Sanctus*). While the choir and the people sing it, the priest addresses each one of the Divine Persons. Calling upon the Spirit he prays: "Holy are you, Eternal Spirit, the Being by whom all things are sanctified" (p. 46). The term "Eternal Spirit" refers to Hb. 9,14 where Christ's priestly work of the self-sacrifice on the cross is shown to have been performed "through the eternal Spirit". Just as the priestly office of Christ is carried on by the Spirit, so it is "through the grace of the Holy Spirit" that the orders of true priesthood are conferred in the church, as is mentioned in the Prayer of Imposition after the preparation of the Gifts (p. 31). The sanctifying function of the Spirit is mentioned also during the ceremony of prostration in the following words of the choir: "The priest... invokes the Holy Spirit; and the Spirit descends from above and sanctifies the Body" (p. 33). This is again brought out in the prayer of *Epiclesis* in which the priest requests the presence of the Holy Spirit and his dwelling in the *Qurbana* so that he may bless and sanctify it (p. 50). This idea of sanctification by the Spirit appears also in the deacon's *karozutha* after the Creed where he prays: "May this *Qurbana* be graciously accepted and sanctified by the Word of God and the Holy Spirit" (p. 40). That the *Epiclesis* forms the concluding and culminating part of the Anaphora and is considered as equally important as the words of Institution themselves, is understandable against this background.

Another point is the relationship of the Spirit with the resurrection. Before the reading of the Epistle the celebrant makes the prayer of *suraya*,

in which he invites the faithful to celebrate the feast of our Lord's mysteries or the saint of the day "with hymns of the Spirit" (pp. 18 f.). The hymn is given in the form of a triple alleluia. This takes us to the Oriental practice of singing alleluia as the hymn of praise on account of the resurrection of our Lord. That this hymn is termed "hymn of the Spirit" has its reason in his role in the Lord's as well as our own resurrection, as is hinted at in Rom. 8,11 and 1,4. This role of the Spirit in the resurrection is symbolized in the "St Thomas Cross" (*Mar Thomma Sliba*) by a dove over the budding cross (without the *corpus*), which itself is a symbol of our Lord's resurrection as it represents the empty tomb on the one hand, and signifies new life coming from the bud¹⁶.

Our profound relationship of worship and gratitude to each of the Divine Persons is expressed by the celebrant in kissing the altar at the middle, and at its right and left corners as he approaches the altar for the Anaphora (p. 40). Here the altar represents the Throne of God: the Father in the middle, the Son at His right and the Spirit at His left.

5) Man as Sinner before the Mystery of God

The *Qurbana* contains numerous references to its understanding of human nature in the light of revelation. In the course of the above discussions we have come across some of the basic themes in this regard, such as man as a creature of God, to His image and likeness; restoration and deification; temple of God; pilgrim community etc. Here we may highlight, however, two important understandings concerning human nature. One dominant perception as is conveyed by the prayers of the *Qurbana* is the humble awareness of man's weak and sinful nature. This is very important

16. Cf. V. Pathikulangara, *Liturgy-Experience op. cit.*, p. 58.

in a world that is increasingly losing the sense of sin. The acknowledgement of sin and unworthiness is the result of the awareness of being in the presence of God, the absolute, holy Mystery. We find this exemplified in St. Peter's reaction when he saw the Lord (cf. Lk. 5,8). Awareness of one's sinfulness and that of God's presence are thus co-related. Below we deal with these two themes.

a) Man as a Sinner

As has been indicated above, the vision of the Holiness and Majesty of God elicits in man the awareness of his own littleness and sinfulness. This is reflected in the priest's prayer as he hears the people chanting the Thrice-Holy Hymn (*Sanctus*), during which he finds himself in the sanctuary, the symbol of heaven. Thus he feels like the prophet Isaiah in his heavenly vision and hence recites the prophet's words (Is. 6,5): "Woe to me, for I am dismayed because I am a man of unclean lips..." (p. 46). The priest's prayer after the initial "Our Father" on the feast days of our Lord is a request to strengthen him that he may render his priestly ministry "free from all stain and evil thoughts" (p.7). The rite of incensing signifies among other things also the purification from our sins and pardon for them, as is indicated in the priest's prayer while putting the grains of frankincense into the censer (p. 21). The reference to "Mary, the sinner" can be also taken to suggest it. The rite of washing the hands is another reference to human sinfulness and God's mercy. The prayer is worth citing. "May God' the Lord of all, remove the uncleanness of our debts and our sins by the sprinkling of His compassion, and may He wash away the stains of our offences in the immense ocean of His mercy" (p. 35). The celebrant's *kussapa* just before the Anaphora has this request:

"O Lord, our God, regard not the multitude of our sins, and let not your majesty despise the burden of our evil deeds. Lord Jesus Christ...sanctify this sacrifice...that it may blot out our many sins" (p. 41). The prayer immediately after the words of Institution and the subsequent Great Intercessory Prayer refer to the same idea (cf. pp. 48f.). In the rite of *Epiclesis* the Holy Spirit is invoked for the sake of "the pardon of debts" and "remission of sins" (p. 50). The rite of Fraction and Consignation is performed within the framework of repentance and remission of sins, i. e. as a penitential rite. This is indicated at the outset by the recitation of the psalm of contrition (Ps. 51) and the prayer of incensing (pp. 51-52); in the middle, by the breaking and dividing of the Body of Christ "unto the forgiveness of sins" as is chanted by the people (p. 54) and the *karozutha* of the deacon to which the faithful respond: "Lord, forgive the sins and offences of your servants" (p. 57); and at the end by the concluding prayer of the priest (p. 58).

The understanding of man as sinner and of the *Qurbana* as effecting pardon and forgiveness thanks to God's ineffable mercy and compassion appears also in the final blessing (cf. p. 69) and in the prayer of farewell to the altar which is named "altar of forgiveness" (p. 71). Thus we find the theme of human sinfulness and God's mercy running throughout the Liturgy.

b) Man as a being of Mystery

The Syro-Malabar Liturgy makes it very clear that man is a being who is intimately related to the Mystery of God. In contemporary theology Karl Rahner has in his transcendental anthropology depicted man as positive openness for and reference to the absolute and holy mystery.¹⁷ Regarding

17. Cf. K Rahner, *Foundations*, pp. 52, 54.

our salvation worked by God in Christ, St Paul calls it "the mystery of his will" (Eph. 1,9), which has been revealed to us in Christ. But this revelation does not take away the character of mystery either of God or of the Christ-event, for they are on principle and by fact, *de jure* and *de facto*, mysteries and remain as such. This mystery-character of worship is a dominant feature of Oriental liturgies and also of all the Eastern cults, even outside the biblical milieu. In India the most sacred part of the temple is located at the innermost of the shrine and is dark, which signifies the aura of mystery associated with it. In the Syro-Malabar Liturgy the mystery is referred to by words, silence and sign. Thus for example, the Bread and Wine as the Body and Blood of Christ are called the mysteries (cf. pp. 37,44,51,56). Similarly, after the peace-giving service the deacon announces: "Let us stand with due reverence and attend to the tremendous mysteries... Let no one dare speak;... stand in silence and reverence" (p. 43). A similar instruction for silence is given before the *Epiclesis* (cf. p. 50). It is this sacred reverence that is behind the separation of the sanctuary (representing heaven) from the nave (signifying the earth) by means of the sanctuary veil with which it is covered at certain times.¹⁸ The use of the veil (cf. pp. 15,26,60) is thus a non-verbal sign of our presence before the Mystery, or rather of the Mystery's presence with us. This Mystery of God is not only tremendous, but also fascinating. St. Peter who becomes aware of his own sinfulness before the Lord (Lk 5,8)

wants also to be with him, for he has the words of eternal life (Jn 6,68). This is the characteristic of God's holy mystery. On the one hand He reveals Himself to us and invites us, but remains the absolute Holy Mystery, on the other. This experience of the burning bush (Ex. 3,4-5) can be detected in the vision of the *Qurbana* very well.

Conclusion

Although the article is not an exhaustive study, it has hopefully shed some light on certain salient features of the theological anthropology in the Syro-Malabar Liturgy of the Holy Eucharist. The above considerations make it clear that the *Qurbana* is rich in biblical and theological insights about man. The blending of the heavenly and earthly; the divine and human; the spiritual and material; the eternal and temporal; the past, present, and future; bears witness to its holistic vision which is formed in a predominantly Trinitarian, Christological and anthropological perspective.

After having studied the Christology of the Syro-Malabar *Qurbana* in a previous article¹⁹, and now its theological anthropology, I have become more and more convinced that the Syro-Malabar Liturgy provides a rich *locus theologicus* for developing a sound theology of the Syro-Malabar Church. There are still so many pearls of insight in the deep and resourceful ocean of the Syro-Malabar Liturgy which ought to be brought to the shore. This will need faith in the Sea and eyes to see.

18. Cf. V. Pathikulangara, *Chaldeo-Indian Liturgy I. Introduction*, Kottayam, 1992, p. 79. Cf. also T. Mannoorampampil, *Syro-Malabar Sabhayude Qurbana. Oru Padanam*, (A Study on the Syro-Malabar Qurbana), Kottayam, 1990 (OIRSI NO. 135), pp. 184 f.
19. Cf. *Christian Orient*, XIV (June 1993), pp. 76-90.

Celebrative Ethics Ecological Problems and *Syro-Malabar Qurbana**

Celebrative Ethics

Celebrative ethics indicates an event of manifesting values, intensively and extensively, through live transmission, which leads to transformation of persons participating in the celebration through appreciation and appropriation of them from within, springing from a lived and living tradition capable of facing the challenges of ever old and ever new circumstances.

The growing difficulty to establish a "canonical hierarchy or rational account of values"¹ in the face of ever evolving and expanding secularistic

attitudes and approaches to the practical and public arena of life compels me to look at ethics from a celebrative perspective.

Celebration² is an event in the life of a person or community. Precisely because it takes place in history. It is, primarily, a remembrance of an important and decisive moment in the life of a person or of a community. Celebration, generally speaking, in varying degrees depending upon the historical nucleus, has three dimensions: recalling; reliving; and renewal. In this sense, it is an event of the time, in the time, for the time.

* This is how, today, the Eucharistic celebration of the Syro-Malabar Church of St. Thomas Christians of India is known. The most solemn form of the *Qurbana* (offering) is the *Raza* (Mystery).

1 H. Tristram ENGELHARDT, Jr., *Bioethics and Secular Humanism: The Search for a Common Morality*, (London, SCM Press, Philadelphia: Trinity Press International, 1991), 101. Here the author argues that the central problem in ethics is to establish a canonical hierarchy or rational account of values. Elsewhere, in the same book, the author arrives at the conclusion: "It does not seem feasible to provide a moral basis that moral strangers should share while fashioning health care policies. Therefore, a concrete bioethics or health care policy seems justifiable only in terms of a particular religion, faith tradition, or ideology." p. 111.

Analyzing the general cultural crisis, Johan VERSTRAETEN lists four factors. The author confronts the problem of lack of hierarchy of values in the society. He observes that relativism and emotivism become highest value. In an emotivistic society every project, every idea, every practice receives the same value. The answer he suggests is ethics of narrative communities of representation and practice. See, Johan VERSTRAETEN, "An Ethical Agenda for Europe," in 1 (*Ethical Perspectives*, 1994) 1, 3-12.

2 According to Edward J. KILMARTIN, "Celebration is a primordial phenomenon of human life. It cannot be brought back to another category and explained through it. It is thoroughly itself, and can be known in its proper

There is an embodiment of values, invariably, in every celebration. Celebration of an event not only manifests values but also transmits them to the community. Consequently, the congregation *recalls* and *relives* values as and how they are narrated. At the same time, the participants *review* and *renew* values (in this context it is life itself. For, life involves an enfleshing of values) in the light of the values that are presented alive through meaningful signs and symbols. Thus, celebration helps the persons of the community to be transformed to the values transmitted. Going a step further, it is proper, I think, to state that each celebration is a manifestation of values of visions of life, the group cherishes and promotes in life. For, celebration presupposes values (*before*) the community believes in and it proposes values (*after*) that it wishes to hold fast in the light of the present.

Celebration, in the light of foregoing discussion, is an event of live transmission of values to the transformation of life.³ Values or beliefs mould the life of a person. Its extended meaning is clear, that is, values

and beliefs mould and shape the vision of a community. It comes to a stage that when the person or community becomes the living embodiment of values to the extent that values and life are inseparably integrated. Here, values become visible and vibrant in a person or in a community. The new commandment, I think, hints, to this integration of values of the love and the life of disciples: "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (Jn. 13:35).

My contention in this paper, to face the ethical dilemma of our times, is to celebrate the faith and the values belief envelops, which one holds fast and about which one feels proud of, in the assembly of the faithful, being ever open to the concrete and challenging questions of time, people and place and being ever faithful to the rich and age old values housed in the traditions of a particular community.⁴ As far as Christians are concerned, in general, we see the elaborate celebration of faith in the Eucharistic assembly, and in particular, Eucharistic celebration proper to the church

reality only in itself." See Edward J. KILMARTIN, *Christian Liturgy: Theology and Practice. I. Systematic Theology of Liturgy*, (Kansas City: Sheed and Ward, 1988), 76. Further the author elaborates it from common experience as follows, "As a humanizing event, it is primarily expansion of consciousness without the loss of contact with the real world. Human beings spontaneously turn from routine living at regular intervals to engage in celebrations of life. Here ordinary expressions of daily life are stylized to serve as mirror for profound realities hidden in day-to-day existence." *Ibidem*, 76.

- 3 E. J. KILMARTIN sheds light on the dynamism of transmitting values to the transformation of life. He points out that ".....this way of acting is intended to bring to the surface enduring values, supportive of human existence, in order that they may be lived more consciously and explicitly. Celebrations of this sort have an important influence on daily conduct; they keep before the minds of celebrants, the pattern of life that is worthy of them." See *Christian Liturgy: Theology and Practice*, 70.
- 4 Ronald ROBERTSON also invites our attention to this dimension of community. He says, "We live at a time when "the search for community" is a very strong feature of everyday and public life, quite regardless of the signs that intellectuals and academics are beginning to rethink this term." Further he outlines the tension as follows: "We now seem to

according to its lived and living tradition, which is, nothing less and nothing more, but, the epiphany of the faith.

Celebration invariably involves or it is encircled by: pastness; presentness; and futureness. While every celebration is in the presentness, it necessarily commemorates something of the past here and now, which is celebrated in view of the time to come. The past and the future meet in the presentness. The event of the past manifests itself in the present moment for a personal experience of the gathered, of course, in and through perceptible symbols, in view of newness that is to be carried over.

The moment of celebration is, simultaneously, a going back and a looking forward in the givenness. The memories of past descends and the present history ascends, in such a way, that they merge in persons who sincerely and wholeheartedly take part in the celebration. This is true in every celebration, be it national, social, religious, family or personal level. The intensity of the experience depends on many factors. Disposition of the participants and the effective communication through perceptible signs and symbols are, however, very important in the transmission of the past experience to the present community for its purposefulness.⁵

be caught on an almost global basis between two views of community. On the one hand, community means to many a "return" to the "local and the traditional." To some others it means, at the other extreme, a complete rethinking of the idea of community in a global context." He argues that "an idea of community is an inevitable aspect of globalization in the sense that the world is in varying degrees thought of as a community." See, Ronald ROBERTSON, "Religion and the Global Field", in 41 (*Social Compass*, 1994) 1, 121-135.

Reflecting on the post-Christendom America, Vigen GUROIAN explores the possibilities of an ecclesial ethic. There he argues, "Tradition is transmitted and becomes normative for Christian living not only through preaching, doctrine, and theological discourse but also through the prayer and worship of Christians. Liturgy provides a vital link between Christian tradition and ethics, shaping their communal meaning and rendering the truth of the Christian faith persuasive." Vigen GUROIAN, *Ethics after Christendom: Toward an Ecclesial Christian Ethic*, (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1994), 33.

E. J. KILMARTIN presents liturgy as the response to a basic need of humans to be conscious of belonging to a community. He illustrates, "In the first place, liturgy involves the being together of like-minded people. It responds to a basic need of humans to be conscious of belonging to a community. Moreover, liturgy supports and deepens what is essential for the existence of the Church. The Church is a community of three partners: God, the individual, and the community. In order to maintain this partnership intact, there must be a real, active and continuous communication. This is a presupposition for all communities. See *Christian Liturgy: Theology and Practice*, 75-76.

5. Every piece of fine art is, in this sense, a beautiful and meaningful celebration. As the artist paints colours on the canvas, she or he, is celebrating the values in which she/he has found happiness, in the givenness, for a newness. The same event of celebration is verifiable in every small creativity.

Celebration of Christian Life

Christian liturgy, which is an eloquent expression of the tradition, is the celebration of Christian existence. It is an epiphany of what a Christian is and must be, the indicative and the imperative of a Christian.

Coming to the celebration of Christian values, the most regular and spectacular event in the life of the Church, is, beyond doubt, the liturgical celebration. Liturgy is said to be the celebration of the Christian existence. "Liturgy is a celebration of what we are, a celebration of our existence."⁶ It is the celebration of Christian life of the believing comm-

unity.⁷ It is the celebration of Christian faith. Christian existence, life, and faith signify one and the same reality.⁸ One can use these terms interchangeably. For, one cannot separate Christian faith from Christian life. "The liturgy in its turn inspires the faithful to become" of one heart in love "when they have tasted to their full of the paschal mysteries; it prays that "they may grasp by deed what they hold by creed".⁹ The deed and creed go hand in hand and make the organic and dynamic Christian existence. In other words, the being and the belief of a person are inseparable. The being expresses the belief. The belief is incarnated and manifested in the being.

6. Varghese PATHIKULANGARA, "The Celebrational Coefficient of Liturgy", 14 (*Christian Orient*, 1993) 2, 57. The special character of liturgy, according to E. J. KILMARTIN, derives from the fact that "it is a celebration of the life of faith." "Liturgy" for Kilmartin, "is the celebration of believers together in the sphere of the new life of faith, or, more precisely, the celebration of the new life in Christ." See *Christian Liturgy: Theology and Practice*, 76.
7. Irénée Henri DALMAIS invites our attention to this dimension of liturgical celebration. "Liturgy" referred, therefore, not to cultic action of individuals or private groups but only to those of the organized community, that is, the entire people, who realized that they shared a single destiny and a collective memory". See Irénée Henri DALMAIS, et., *The Church at Prayer: An Introduction to the Liturgy*, Vol. 1. *Principles of the Liturgy*, eds. G. G. MARTIMORT, et., trans, Matthew J. O'CONNEL, New Edition (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1987), 233.
8. E. J. KILMARTIN calls our attention to this fact in the following words, "For the life of faith is a totality, embracing the whole of human existence, expressing itself fully in all the ways it is actualized." See *Christian Liturgy: Theology and Practice*, 73.
9. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 10. The same current of thought is carried forward in *Veritatis Splendor*, 107: "... flowing from and nourished by that inexhaustible source of holiness and glorification of God which is found in the Sacraments, especially in the Eucharist: by sharing in the sacrifice of the Cross, the Christian partakes of Christ's self-giving love and is equipped and committed to live this same charity in all thoughts and deeds."

Joseph A. SELLING presents the relationship between faith and ethics, which is the question between creed and deed, as essential and existential. According to him, "The most fundamental criterion for ethical reflection can only be fully and consistently engaged when we allow ourselves to be criticized and corrected by that same criterion we claim to believe." He draws then, "The relation between faith and ethics, therefore, is one that touches upon the very foundation of our ethical perspective. Faith does not provide rules and concrete ethical norms, although it may have a critical

If liturgy is the celebration of Christian existence,¹⁰ necessarily it veils and unveils the mystery of Christian vision of life and the values thereby. It veils the Christian vision of life in the sense that it is the storehouse of views and values of Christian horizon.¹¹ It unveils the vision of Christian life in the sense that the values of Christian life are manifested to the assembly of the faithful when gathered for the celebration through signs and symbols.¹² The mystery of Christ and the history of salvation is made present to the community that celebrates the mystery

of faith.¹³ There is the immersion of the personal mystery and story of the celebrants in the history of salvation and the mystery of Christ. Together with that there is the presentation of views and values to the faithful, in and through the celebration. The celebration of the mystery enables the members to have an encounter with the values of the Kingdom and an opportunity to examine one's own life in the light of the mystery celebrated.¹⁴ It takes place naturally and spontaneously: "Taking part in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, which is the fount and apex of

attitude toward the acceptability or the necessity of certain concrete rules and norms that are proposed as ethical standards". Showing the essential relationship he argues that "A faith that contains a fundamental proposition about the creative activity of personal God will demand respect for the work of that creative activity and demand that this respect be embodied in concrete action and norms." The challenge according to the author is that. "The faith they profess can and will correct their shortcomings and challenge their shortsightedness, if persons are willing to profess that faith integrally and openly, submitting themselves to the reality that goes beyond their own, situated existence." See Joseph A. SELLING, "In Search of A Fundamental Basis for Ethical Reflection," in 1 *Ethical Perspectives*, 1994) 1, 13-21.

Johan VERSTRAETEN thinks in the same line of thought. He remarks, "Faith is not an interaction with a fossil, but is an event experienced in community that generates fundamental ethical attitudes." See Johan VERSTRAETEN, "An Ethical Agenda for Europe," in 1 (*Ethical perspectives*, 1994) 1,8.

10. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 10 expounds as follows: "Nevertheless the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; at the same time it is the fountain from which all her power flows."
11. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1327 states: "In brief, the Eucharist is the sum and summary of our faith: 'Our way of thinking is attuned to the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn confirms our way of thinking.'"
12. *Veritalis Splendor*, no. 21 teaches: "Sharing in the *Eucharist*, the sacrament of the New Covenant (cf. *1 Cor* 11:23-29), is the culmination of our assimilation to Christ, the source of "eternal life" (cf. *Jn* 6:51-58), the source and power of that complete gift of self, which Jesus-according to the testimony handed on by Paul commands us to commemorate in liturgy and in life: "As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (*1 Cor* 11:26)."
13. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 2 establishes: "For it is through the liturgy, especially the divine Eucharistic Sacrifice, that "the work of our redemption is exercised."
14. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 2 instructs: "The liturgy is thus the outstanding means by which the faithful can express in their lives, and manifest to others, the mystery of Christ and the real nature of the true Church."

the whole Christian life,¹⁵... which nourishes the disciple with Christ's Body and Blood for his transformation in Christ".¹⁶

The voice that is echoed in the ears of the faithful and the face that shines before the eyes of the celebrants go deep down to the depths of one's being and transform the being from within. The compassionate voice and the loving face that echoes and radiates transform the beholder gradually, as the mystery¹⁷ unveils by means of celebration.

This was how the great deeds of Yahweh were retold and remembered among the people of Israel during their festivities. One can appreciate the whole scene of telling or narrating or celebrating aspects of great feasts of Israelites. For example, the feast of Passover. The narration of the exodus story, the covenant of Yahweh, at the interrogation of the children regarding the meaning of the function, is a picturesque scene of the celebration [cf. *Ex* 12:26ff]. The method of communication is wonderful here. The celebration generates an interest, in the minds of people, to know and to follow the meaning or the value. The narration of the story follows. For a few, the event and meaning is quite new. For others, it is a question of revision and renewal. Remember, the narration is also an essential part of the celebration. In this sense, the very celebration becomes communication. Further, the celebration is an occasion for communion and union. It is a

celebration for formation and transformation. Not only they remembered the wonders of Yahweh, but also they relived in the experience of their ancestors in thanksgiving. It was not only a commemoration and a thanksgiving celebration of the past in the present but also it sets the tone of the Covenant and the track clear to walk with Yahweh in the vicissitudes of life. In order to keep the spirit of the covenant ever alive we find the injunction of the Lord to "keep this service" [*Ex* 12:25].

The Paschal celebration of Jesus with his disciples is a typical example of this transmitting dynamism of values and transforming the lives. The injunction of the Lord, "To do this in memory of me" could be seen as the ground of such repeated regular celebrations. The very scene of washing of the feet of the disciples by the master is a moving one, which is followed by the breaking of the bread. It is a moving scene. When it is re-enacted today, the values of service and sharing are transmitted to the gathering and helps the beholder to transform internally without any external pressure whatsoever.¹⁸ The more the story is made attractive and appealing, the more informative, formative and transformative it becomes. To make something attractive is not merely identical with external decoration. Nor does it mean to present only the rational content in logical parameters. It is not simply in blowing up the emotional elements. It is not fanatic or fundamentalistic in character. Rather, the

15. *Lumen Gentium*, no. 11.

16. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1275.

17. *Mysterium Fidei*, no. 2 attacks the virus of rationalism and teaches Eucharist as "a very great mystery" and proposes as "a most precious treasure the mystery of faith, that is, the ineffable gift of the Eucharist."

18. I think the secret of living popular religion, without any organized external authority, is in its effective and efficient transmission of values through regular popular celebrations of the great events or stories that back the religion.

success of transmitting the values of the story consists in manifesting the original story as it is lived in the tradition down the ages, using the principle of continuity and discontinuity.

Liturgy, through its elaborate and extensive celebration of the history of salvation and the mystery of Christ, presents the ever old Christian views and values of life in an ever vibrating and living manner through the means of celebration.

Eucharist is the source and summit of Christian life. If so, it must be veiling and unveiling the Christian mystery, the Christian vision of life. And it does so undoubtedly in and through the celebration.

Eucharistic Liturgy is the source and summit of Christian life.¹⁹ If it is so, the Eucharist would be a replica of Christian vision of life. The celebration of the Eucharist would, then, mean that the celebration of Christian vision of life. Christian vision of life would necessarily portray a definite Christian world view. In this connection, it must be reflected and revealed in the Eucharistic liturgy as well. The Christian world view is both cosmic and eschatological. Therefore, the Christian world view celebrated and communicated in the Eucharistic liturgy is both worldly and heavenly. We would now examine these above propositions to clarify and to verify if they are true and what could be the possible contribution it could make in facing the ecological problems.

Christian World Vision

The Christian vision of life to be holistic must, necessarily, include

in it the vision of the world. The Christian world vision is one of cosmic and eschatological. It underlines an attachment to and a detachment from the world. This Christian world vision is manifested and celebrated in and through the eucharistic gathering.

Christian world vision is a coupled one: it is simultaneously positive and negative; cosmic and eschatological; worldly and heavenly; attachment and detachment; love and hatred. They are inseparably united and makes a holistic vision. "It is of the essence of the Church that she be both human and divine, visible and yet invisibly endowed, eager to act and yet devoted to contemplation, present in this world and yet not at home in it. She is all these things in such a way that in her the human is directed and subordinated to the divine, the visible likewise to the invisible, action to contemplation, and this present world to that city yet to come, which we seek (cf. Heb. 13:14)".²⁰

Any attempt to neglect one aspect over the other is a serious deviation from the original vision. So also the exaggeration of any one of two dimensions inherent to the view would be simply infringing the coherent vision. The very paradox of Christian vision of life, i. e., life and death, cross and crown, is reflected here in the case of Christian world vision as well. It is just and fitting. For the vision is one and the same and encompasses every stratum of thought, word and action. It is quite natural to reflect the basic vision in every minute fibre of the organic whole. The wholeness of Christian vision demands it. Because, the revelation and the tradition speak and support this apparent paradox.

19. See *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 10; *Lumen Gentium*, no. 11; *Mysterium Fidei*, no. 2; *Veritatis Splendor*, no. 21; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1324.

20. *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, no. 10.

Christian vision of the world is a synthesis of positive and negative visions of the world, or it is a christian paradox. On the one hand, it is a world to be loved, on the ground that God saw "it was very good" [Gen 1:31] and "so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son" [Jn 3:16]. "All things were made through him and without him was not any thing made that was made" [Jn 1:3]. "All things were created by him and for him" [Col 1:16]. "Reconciling all things unto himself" through the death on the cross" [Col 1:20]. "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters" [Ps 24:1]. "Let the sea resound, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it" [Ps 98:7]. "... for the world is mine, and all that is in it" [Ps 50:12]. "Go into the world and preach the good news to all creation" [Mk 16:15]. "For we know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time" [Rom 8:22].

On the other hand, this world is to be denied and rejected. "Do not conform to this world". "You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world" [Jn 8:23]. "But take heart! I have overcome the world" [Jn 16:33]. "You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them" [1 Jn 4:4-5]. "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you" [Jn 15:18-19]. "We know that

we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one" [1 Jn 5:19]. "Don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God" [Jam 4:4]. "Do not love the world or anything in the world" [1 Jn 2:15].

Above scriptural citations provide us with two opposite world visions. Both the visions are part of the Christian revelation. To be faithful to the revelation, one has to take into account of these opposing visions. Alexander Schmemmann summarizes this as follows: "... the true Christian experience involves some kind of synthesis between these two visions of 'world'. The negative vision is very positive in a spiritual sense; that is to say, it is genuinely necessary to leave the world, to cultivate detachment and freedom from it. But this detachment develops easily into a kind of indifference, a lack of regard for God's creation; gradually the Church becomes aware of this tendency and corrects it by a renewed emphasis upon concern for the world and its goodness".²¹ Schmemmann points to the other danger as well, that is, getting too much involved in the affairs of the world. Thus, the author cautions the faithful about the danger on both extremes. He requests the readers to be vigilant to keep the pendulum in balance. What he suggests, therefore, is a reconciliation and synthesis between the two visions available to us in the revelation: "Here, then, we must reconcile and synthesize. Acceptance of the world is more than justifiable, it is necessary. There can be no Christianity where the world is not seen as an object of divine love. On the other hand, there is every justification for the detachment, that abandonment of the world so heavily

21. Alexander SCHMEMMANN, *Church, World, Mission: Reflection on Orthodoxy in the West*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 1989), 219.

stressed in the ascetical tradition. To effect a living synthesis between these two principles is, precisely, to define the Christian attitude to the world".²² Alfons Auer puts this idea briefly, "In other words, by the relationship of Church and world is meant the *principles of duality and integration*".²³ Karl Rahner expresses this tension in a different way, "That, however, which embraces world-and salvation-history in their unity and diversity, is the most real history of all".²⁴

We see the Christian vision of the world, marvellously and beautifully, reflecting in the eucharistic liturgy. The synthesis, which Schmemmann suggests, is explicitly manifested and celebrated in the Liturgy. It is in this context the importance of eucharistic fountain that emerges to be an effective communication of the mystery and an efficient channel to elicit commitment to the world.

Once we have the perceptiveness of the Christian world vision, we are in a position to verify that this is the same world vision we celebrate in and through the Eucharistic liturgy. In the liturgy of my Church, I have outlined some of the salient features based on the very structure of the

Raza (Mystery), the most solemn form of the order of the *Qurbana* (Offering).²⁵

The *Qurbana* introduces the assembly to the Christian cosmic reality, the earth and heaven, cosmic and eschatological, through the chanting of the Angel's hymn, which is placed in the *anaxis* of the Liturgy. Singing the hymn, the faithful refreshes and interiorizes the memory of the Christian story of creation-incarnation-salvation. On the one hand, it represents the right relationship of God-humans-earth for maintaining the harmony. And on the other hand, it helps the gathering to reexperience the goal of liturgy, that is, giving glory to God and attaining sanctification of humans, and hence to reorientate the faithful towards the values of Christian life.

This is immediately followed by the **invocation** of the cosmic reality through the recital of the Lord's Prayer. The memory of the glory of God in the heavens and the welfare of humans on earth generates an inner desire for the permanence of the same. Here, again, the triad: Nature-Neighbour-Other reappears in the following pattern, namely, "here

22. *Ibidem*, 219-220.

23. Alfons AUER, "The Changing Character of the Christian Understanding of the World," in *The Christian and the World: Readings in Theology*, (Innsbruck: The Canisianum, 1965), 37.

24. Karl RAHNER, "World History and Salvation History," in *The Christian and the World: Readings in Theology*, (Innsbruck: The Canisianum, 1965), 67.

25. See Paulachan KOCHAPPII.LY, *Eucharist and Ecology: Moral Commitment in the Light of Two Paradigms*, (Accademia Alfonsiana, Roma, 1994), unpublished dissertation submitted for the degree of Licentiate in Moral Theology. In the above cited study, I have developed the following moments of celebration, where the cosmic mystery unveiled and celebrated in a programmatic and encompassing manner: Introduction of the Cosmic Mystery; Invocation of the Cosmic Reality; Intercession for the Harmony; Transformation of the Cosmic Reality; Foundation of the Cosmic Reality; Acclamation of the Cosmic mystery; Reconciliation with the Cosmic Reality; Communion with the Mystery; and Thanksgiving to the Mystery.

on earth as in heaven", "human beings who pray" and "Father" to whom the congregation addresses the prayer. It is a reassertion of the interdependence that pervades and promotes the rhythm of life. Also the Lord's Prayer offers an occasion for the community to examine herself the inherent relatedness with God, "Our Father", human beings and the earth. Without reducing the uniqueness proper to everybody, it reinstates the commonness. The meaning of the Kingdom of God, which Jesus Christ proclaimed at the inauguration of his ministry and to which the assembly marches towards, illumines and enlightens the faithful with its values of immanence and transcendence.

The *karoazutha* is yet another moment of **intercession** for harmony. The elaborate confession of the faithful is, basically, cosmic, ecclesial and eschatological in character. The Lord of mercy is invoked upon the whole world, all churches, faithful, all countries, ministers of the churches for the constant and continued peace, harmony and stability in the world. The picture of the triad is explicit here as well. It is the Lord who showers his mercy in order to sustain everything and everyone. Ministers, both ecclesial and national, contribute their share depending upon the mercy of the Father. *Karoazutha* reveals the experience of the faithful about the significance of the material world and its stability and prosperity for their realization of the eschatological in the cosmic. See how the deep rooted belief of the community is given expression in the following strophe of *karoazutha*, "for a temperate climate for a good harvest and an abundance of fruit, and for the prosperity of the whole world, we beseech you."²⁶

Transfer of the gifts, in the *Syro-Malabar Qurbana*, celebrates and

communicates magnificently the **transformation** of the cosmic to Christic or eschatological, that is, the bread and wine to the body and blood of the Lord, maintaining their proper identity and uniqueness. It gives the foretaste of the Kingdom of God. It also manifests the pervading and permeating presence of the risen Lord in the world. The elements of the universe, progressing to the fuller revelation of the mystery, are capable of projecting the eschatological reality from within, of course, to the believers and only palpable to the logic of faith. Here too one could capture the role of triad. The cosmic elements become eschatological in and through the power of the risen Lord for the faithful as the food of the Kingdom of God here on earth.

The **foundation** of the cosmic reality, declared undoubtedly, is the Holy Trinity. Apart from the blessing formula, like, "Lord of all, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for ever and ever," "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," the confession of faith testifies the foundation of the cosmic reality as the trinitarian Godhead, the *from*, the *through*, and *by* whom we have cosmic reality. Another important trinitarian blessing formula is, "Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, love of the Father, Fellowship of the Holy Spirit." I consider it proper and fitting, that the grace love and fellowship believers experience in the presence of the Lord flow out to everybody in the universe as expression of one's essence and existence, being and becoming. Cosmic reality is a flowing from the fountain, that is, God, to the world for everybody in the world.

The **acclamation** of the cosmic mystery is another important moment of the celebration. It is evident at this moment of celebration how cosmic

26. *Text of the Order of Raza* (Syro-Malabar Bishop's Conference, 1989), 22.

reality is related to the cosmic mystery of the Trinity. In the *g'hanta* prayer believers come across this praising of the Trinity. The entire creation sings praise to the Holy Trinity. The heavenly and the earthly choirs join together and worship the Lord, singing the *sanctus*. The prayer that follows the *sanctus* consisely and candidly manifest the acclamation due to the Holy Trinity. It runs as follows: "Holy are you, God; you alone are the Father of truth from whom is all fatherhood in heaven and on earth. Holy are you, Eternal Son, through whom all things were made. Holy are you, Holy Spirit, the Being by whom all things are sanctified."²⁷ Each person of the Holy Trinity is praised and worshipped for their specific function in connection with the world. Everything in heaven and on earth is *from* God, the Father. All things are made *through* God, the Son. All things are sanctified *by* God, the Holy Spirit. So *everybody* is profoundly and profusely punctuated by the trinitarin presence. It is a recovery of the original memory of wholeness and holiness. This is yet another way of confessing and proclaiming the Lordship of God over all creation. The creation manifests and communicates the holy Mystery to the assembly. Moreover, by praising the holy Mystery from the inexplicable experience, the faithful confesses the rootedness and the interrelatedness with the cosmic mystery and the cosmic reality. It also ratifies the fact that the creation and human beings have common footing and dependence for existence in the holy Mystery.

Before the awesome holy mystery it is quite natural to experience one's unworthiness. And this experience of the sinfulness leads one to the needfulness of the **reconciliation** and integration. The elaborate rite of reconciliation, in the *Syro-Malabar Qurbana* explicitly

points to the vertical and horizontal brokenness and subsequent urgency of relatedness. There is no explicit mention of Nature in the rite. Reasons may be many. One of which could be that at the time of its formulation and solidification, the community of the faithful might not have confronted the vast and pressing ecological problems that the believing community faces today. Again one could allude the dimension of one's relatedness with Nature implicitly present in the rite, at least, on two grounds. First of all, the comprehensive vision of human relatedness necessarily takes into account of the Nature as well. For, the relationship is organic and dynamic in nature. Next, the aspect of reconciliation with Nature is in full agreement with the general spirit of the *Syro-Malabar Qurbana*.

Thanksgiving to the cosmic Mystery, with which the Eucharistic celebration concludes, is a genuine manifestation of the cosmic reality and its dependence upon the Lord of all. Thanksgiving prayer illustrates it as follows. "May his grace and mercy be showered upon us and upon the whole world, upon the church and her children+ now and always and for ever and ever."²⁸

Before we proceed to the consequence of the Christian world vision that we celebrate in the Eucharist to the ecological problems, we need to comprehend the ecological problems. Therefore, in the next part we shall discuss the ecological problems.

Understanding of the Ecological Problems

Ecology is the study of the inherent relatedness, interdependence of somebody with everybody and vice versa in the universe. Relatedness is the

27. *The Order of the Raza* (Syro-Malabar Bishop's Conference, 1989), 38

28. *The Order of the Raza* (Syro-Malabar Bishop's Conference, 1989), 61.

key to life. Ecological problem is the result of human blindness to the inherent relatedness that supports and promotes life. It could be stated as rootlessness with Nature; isolatedness from Neighbour; and orientationlessness with the Other. The triad, a model, to face the challenges of the ecological problems, presupposes one's radical rootedness with Nature; horizontal relatedness with Neighbour; and a vertical oneness with the Other.

Reflecting on the ecological problems, Bede Griffiths, highlights the gravity of it in the following words: "Would it be an exaggeration to say that ecology is the greatest problem that faces humanity to-day? The conflict between East and West is political and economic problem; the conflict between North and South is economic and cultural; even the conflicts of race and religion are in a sense local and particular. But the problem of ecology involves the very existence not only of humanity but of the planet earth itself. The earth on which we live and on which we depend for our existence of life on this planet is threatened."²⁹

There are different approaches to the ecological problems depending on the angle from and the lens through which a particular author or specific community looks at the reality. However, these approaches are not contradictory but complementary in comprehending the problem and the consequent solution. I limit myself in presenting a personal approach to the ecological problems.

I do not claim that this approach gives the whole picture of the problem. But, I think it would display one model, and only a model. Nevertheless, I feel this synthesis is important at this juncture, for any extreme position

would not be a solution to the problem. One extreme position invites, naturally, the other extreme. Applying this principle into our issue, we observe tendencies to absolutize the nature in order to protect and promote it from the present ecological crisis. They disregard other basic principles involved in the issue. Therefore, I consider my humble attempt for a synthesis is important and valid.

At the very outset, let me make it clear, ecology is a science that studies the inherent relationship of things in the cosmos. It is, therefore, a study of interrelatedness or interrelationship of somebody with everybody. Therefore, the key to my model is *relationship*, or *relatedness*.

Before, I enter into the model proper, may I share the vision behind this model. The basic perception of wholeness, harmony or salvation, negatively speaking, is not in isolation; and positively speaking, is in and through relatedness or connectedness. This is part of our everyday experience. Take for example, our own body. It has many parts or members. Only when the members of the body are properly related with each other, we call it a body. The harmony of the body depends upon the properly related communications and regulated actions. Every member is significant, in its own proper place and function, for the harmonious function of the body.

This perception of the reality discloses two things: on the one hand, it speaks about one body; and on the other hand, it takes for granted many bodies. The advantage of this vision is that each and everybody is important constitutive to the wholeness. It projects a unity and a diversity, oneness and manyness. To put it more correctly,

29. Bede GRIFFITHS, "Nature, Technology and the New Society," 18 (*Jeeva-dhara*, 1988) 103, 23-31.

it upholds unity in diversity. It takes delight in differences and oneness.

The model I suggest is a triad, three dimensional relationship, over against the "traditional" two dimensional relationship. The main purpose of making it triad is to incorporate the third dimension of our relationship. Indian and Christian traditions have inspired me to formulate the triad. For, in both these traditions, in which I find myself, there is a consideration of Trinitarian Godhead. To introduce something new to the living traditions, I think, we need to employ the categories that which are akin to it, if possible, will serve the purpose better.

In order to understand the gravity of the ecological problems and to contribute to the solution, however small it may be, from a religious yet secular category, I present this model, the triad of relationship: *Nature-Neighbour-Other*. Every model has its own limits and benefits, so too, this model. Anyhow, this model has two fundamental advantages, as I reflect on it. First, it is capable of explaining the essential relationships one *has* and *should* have. Second, both, a religious person and a secular society could, simultaneously, make use of the model. This is to accommodate the growing phenomenon of a person being religious in a secular society. To clarify this point further, people sense today, more than ever, the need to be religious in their personal life and commitment, being faithful to one's own tradition. At the same time, there is another, equal, if not in a greater measure, the advancement of secularism in our present society.

The triad : Nature - Neighbour - Other, stands for our relationship with the Nature, Neighbour and the Other. Nature stands for *charachar* [moving and nonmoving], that is in the universe. Neighbour points to all human beings. The Other signifies the ultimate

reality. Different traditions attach different names or notions to the ultimate reality. The *Other* receives definite name and form in a given tradition, be it religion or philosophy. For Christians, it is the Trinitarian Godhead, Father-Son-Holy Spirit. Earlier, we thought, it is enough, to love God and love neighbour, the content of every law, for salvation. If we include all things of the universe into the category of neighbour, there is no point in treating things of the universe separately, as in our triad. Saint Francis of Assisi could address the things of the universe, as his brother or sister. This is also part of the Christian tradition. However, this is not the main trend we notice in the Church. If it were so, there would not have been, I think, the present ecological crisis. This gives us a ground for treating Nature separately. Moreover, Nature enjoys an importance on its own ground, for our relation to it would reveal the significance of Neighbour and the Other and help us to realize our relationships with human beings and God, much more wider and deeper. Another question in this context is, if Nature stands for everything of the universe, can we think human beings and the ultimate reality exist outside this universe. Are they not included in this reality of Nature? My simple answer would be a "yes and no." "Yes" in the sense that the universe cannot exist without the ultimate being. "No" in the sense that the ultimate reality is not fully manifested in the creation. Moreover, the ultimate reality cannot be a limited reality. Theologically speaking, immanent aspect of God indicates to the "yes" and the transcendent aspect of God points to the "no." Now, reflecting on the status of human beings in the world, human being enjoys a unique position with regard to her/his capacity of reflection compared to other beings (we do not know beings capable of reflection other than

human beings, if at all they exist) of the world. Because of this special capacity of reflection, human beings, while being in the world they transcend the universe. But, it does not in any way belittle the uniqueness of other beings in the world. Everything is unique in its own place and function.

After having clarified the sphere proper to the triad, we are in a position to enter into the discussion of the relationship, proper to human beings. The principle of relationship proposed in this model is one *rooted* in Nature, *related* to all Neighbours and *oriented* to the Other. In other words, to the traditionally emphasised 'two-dimensional' relationships, that is, vertical and horizontal, one more dimension is added to it, which is radical. Thus, our essential and existential relationship become 'tri-dimensional': *radical-horizontal-vertical* representing *Nature-Neighbour-Other* respectively.

Paul Kalluveettil succeeds in capturing the earth dimension of human beings analyzing the creation account in Genesis. He observes, "The relationship between man and the earth is very fundamental that humankind can be mostly understood and defined only in reference to the earth, vice versa. The story of one becomes the story of the other. Adam serves the whence and wither of Adam, task and sustenance... Humanness meant 'land-ness'," ³⁰ It clearly states how human beings are fundamentally related to Nature. Kalluveettil further elaborates the rootedness of human beings in Nature: "Yahwistic tradition

understands his call as the cultivator of the earth (Gen 2:5), Adam being wedded to adamah, soil (3:19;2:7). This portrait of man reflects the socio-cultural context of the peasants of Palestine. Man is earth-orientated being who owes his existence (3:19), substance (2:9), task (2:15;2:5;3:23;4:2) and finality (3:19) to adamah. Earth serves for him as the temple of God, a medium for God/human realization (*saksatkara*)."³¹ Walter Duerig invites our attention to this truth. He writes, "In the account of creation, it is clear that the world was created as a cosmos, that is, that creatures of every sort do not exist in isolation, only for themselves, but rather stand in a real order and inner *connectedness* to one another."³²

Thus, we find an existential interrelatedness to which God invites his people to share and to bear witness. It seems to me that the order of the interrelationship is the cosmic design of God.

It is proper, I think, to develop human relationship with the Nature. This human relatedness to earth speaks aloud the other dimensions of his relationships, namely, God and human beings, which constitute the harmony or happiness. The "land-ness" of human being is in the plan of God. God created the earth and heaven (Gen 2:4); then he causes rain to water the ground (2:5) and since there was not a man to till the ground (2:5b) Yahweh formed man of dust of the ground (2:7). Further, he planted a garden (2:8) and Yahweh put the man there to till and to keep it (2:15b).

30. Paul KALLUVEETIL, "The Transcending and Transgressing Man: The Dialectical Anthropology of Genesis 1-XI," 12 (*Bible Bhashyam* 1986), p. 99.

31. Paul KALLUVEETIL, "Social Criticism as the Prophetic Role: A Biblical Prolegomenon", 19 (*Jeevadhara*, 1989) 110,134.

32. Walter DUERIG, "The Eucharist as Symbol of the Consecration of the World", in *The Christian and the World: Readings in Theology*, (Innsbruck: The Canisianum, 1965), 121.

Yahweh, then, said to himself: "It is not good that man should be alone" (2:18a). Thus, he created the animals and birds (2:19). That was not the end. Yahweh made a woman (2:21) and presented her unto Adam (2:22). Adam exclaimed: "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh." (2:23a). This expression speaks for itself, how dear and near she was to him. The characteristic feature of Yahwistic tradition is that everything on earth and in the air has been created by Yahweh from the earth. In other words, everything in the universe, except the heaven, emerges from the earth by the work of God. It is his handicraft. As a result, there is an inherent unity in the cosmos. A perfect rhythm is visible. Also we observe the interplay of God-Nature-Humans in creating harmony in the world: he formed everything from the earth and he appoints human species to take care of everything. When all the three, viz, God, Humans and Nature, were given due recognition and reverence, harmony prevailed.

Another important insight Kalluveetil draws from the book of Genesis, in this connection, is the destiny of human beings, which contributes to the ecological discussions. The destiny of human beings, he explains: "The *elohim*-like being is God's image, son and servant ... In loving responsibility and grateful loyalty he is destined to become the cosmic face and voice of God on earth."³³

Another significant thing that takes place in connection with the triad is that if any change happens in any one of the three realms of

relationship, it causes drastic consequences in every other realms. That is to say, though we see three different realms, they are basically and fundamentally related with each other as a whole. One such conspicuous account is available in Genesis chapter 3.

To depict this fallenness in the story, Adam and his wife disobeyed Yahweh, ate the fruit which was forbidden (v 6). Now, Yahweh appears on the scene (v 8a). But Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord (v 8b). Yahweh questions Adam. In turn, Adam accuses the woman (v 12). No more he sees his wife as the bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh (cf. 2:23). Yahweh curses everyone involved in the story (vv 14-18). And humans had to leave the garden (v 23). It is clear, from this examination, that how the brokenness in relationship in one of the three realms can create a havoc for the earthly life and eventually break our relationship with all the other realms.³⁴

While C. Dean Freudenberger inviting us to shift our emphasis from "human-centredness to a God-centredness," in the context of "Dominion Ethics," he too highlights the three dimensional relationships involved in it. The proper attitude that he prescribes is: "...the land (the creation) is God's, not ours. Everything has meaning for the Creator. We are not free to do with the land as we please; rather, the human responsibility is to relate to the land (not to use it) as responsible stewards, as a species capable of reflection and able to express gratitude for life and for the created order of planet earth, in its

33. Paul KALLUVEETIL, "The Transcending and Transgressing Man," 99.

34. We see the question of relationship or communion with the triad: Nature-Neighbour-Other echoing in every successive phases of recreation, new creation, incarnation and in the eschaton.

galaxy, that sustains life and human history, that sustains the history of the evolution of this miraculous thing called life in all its fullness."³⁵

What I want to focus here is that our radical relationship with Nature has its wide range influence on all our relationships. Our reconciliation with Nature is a guarantee that we are in union or in communion with Neighbour and the Other. I believe that the relationship with the mother earth and the entire creation is basic to human life. It could be compared with that of one's own mother. For, life and sustenance we depend on earth and its fruit. The moment we cut off our reverential relationship with earth and the entire eco-system, we are uprooted from the world of awe and mystery. The moment our relationship with the natural world is exploitative, we deny a decent living to many. The moment we lose the capacity to relate with the Other, who is "with us," we lack orientation.

Whenever, therefore, we fail to relate to any of the triad, we fail miserably to maintain wholeness, holiness, happiness or salvation. This realization drives us home to the gravity of the ecological problems. So, ecological problem is not an isolated problem. Its repercussions are visible all around: *rootlessness with our Nature; isolatedness from Neighbour; and directionlessness or lack of orientation in life*. In my opinion, to deny one of the three-fold relationships is the denial or saying "no" to wholeness. Since, ecology, fundamentally, is the study of interrelatedness and interrelationship of one thing with the rest of the things, or *somebody* with *everybody*, in the universe, I am

convinced, we need to reflect on every relationship possible and inevitable in maintaining its meaningfulness and purpose.

Thus, the root cause of the present day ecological problems, according to me, is manifold, which could be briefly stated as follows: *in our rootlessness with the Nature; isolatedness from Neighbour; and orientationlessness in life*. That is to say, the rupture of our relationship with the triad: *Nature-Neighbour-Other*, is the prime reason for the ecological problems. Nevertheless, the ecological problem is not an isolated one. Ecological crisis, I consider, is a related problem and is reflected upon other fields of our relationships. It becomes evident as we analyze the ecological issue, at the very root of it, there is a lack of proper orientation to God, the source and the sovereign Lord of all creation. Human beings regard themselves as the "Lord" of all. They think that they can control and manipulate the creation, as and how they dream. For, human beings have lost their proper direction and destiny. Human beings often fail to sense the permeating and pervading presence of the Lord in creation, resulting in a meaninglessness of life. She or he forgets the unique role, the stewardship of creation before the Lord, and instead, pretends to be the "Lord" of the world. Once she or he counts herself or himself as the "Lord," the whole scene of relationship changes, the servant becomes the master of the house, which would finally end up in quarrel with the other servants of the house and the house become deserted and abandoned. Thus, we notice how important is the orientation to the Other to keep the rhythm of the cosmos going.

35. C. Dean FREUDENBERGER, "Implications of a New Land Ethic," in *Theology of the Land*, eds., Bernard F. EVANS and Gregory D. CUSACK, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1987), 74

The ecological problem is also the consequence of the isolatedness with our fellow human beings. The exploitation of the limited natural resources to the benefit of a few ends up with the unjust system of distribution. The forgetfulness of the human beings, which eventually leads to isolation, threatens the interpersonal relationship. From now on, persons are things to be used and abused. Unfortunately, the immediate victims of the ecological crisis are not the exploiters of the Nature and the Neighbour. However, the exploiters too become prey to the phenomenon of isolatedness, in the midst of every affluence, the so called prosperity, in the society and in the family. A vacuum is formed. Nobody is trusted. Everybody doubts the other as a potential threat to the existence. The attitudinal shift to God, the Lord of all, alter the human relationship and our relationship with the creation.

Ecological crisis is an offshoot of our rootlessness with the Nature. Often we forget our roots. At times we cut not only the branches on which we sit ourselves, but also the root, which supports life. The pollution in different spheres of our life is a clear witness to this fact. The interrelatedness of different species to support the whole system of life on the face of the earth, is not given due attention if not neglected altogether. Here again, the mentality of consumerism governs supreme. The limited resources of the Nature and the unlimited greed of a few deepen the problem.

To this multifaceted ecological problems, what I would suggest, is a rediscovery and a rededication of ourselves to the manifold relationship of the triad: *a radical rootedness with the Nature; a horizontal unitedness with the Neighbour; and a vertical oneness*

with the Other to overcome the rootlessness with, the isolatedness from, and the orientationlessness to Nature, Neighbour and the Other, respectively.

Christian Commitment in the Face of Ecological Problems

The eucharistic celebration is an epiphany of the Christian world vision, which also takes into account of the triad: Nature-Neighbour-Other. Assembly is transformed accordingly.

But many factors may be obstructing the atmosphere in transmitting the values to the celebrating community. Blindness to the inner dynamism between values celebrated and lives lived, or liturgy and life, or theology and life could be one of the many reasons for its ineffectiveness. Openness to the celebrated and celebrating values may make them transparent and help oneself to be transformed to the epiphany.

The analysis of the Christian world vision and the Christian celebration of it in the liturgy, especially in the Eucharist, offers us a fundamental disposition to face the challenge ecological problems pose for our times. The Christian world vision is a synthesis of cosmic and eschatological reality. It is this mystery of faith that we celebrate in the Eucharist. Through the meaningful celebration, the values housed in this Christian world vision are shared with each member of the assembly of the faithful in order to bear witness in the concreteness. The values transmitted through the celebration transform the congregation. Walter Dürig succeeds in capturing the inherent dynamism as follows: "The Eucharist manifests and pledges the fulfillment of the creature's longing for

transfiguration."³⁶ Dürig suggests that "... the deepest meaning and purpose in our work is to form the Eucharist, to realize the Lord's body in the forms of the world."³⁷ The argument the author puts forward deserves our attention: "Because the Eucharist as food becomes one with him who eats it, it transforms not only man's work, but also his being."³⁸ The theological foundation for this transformation, according to Dürig, is incarnation. He writes: "When the believer acknowledges that the sacrament of the altar is Jesus Christ's true body and blood, he gains a deeper and more complete understanding of the relationship between God and the world which he experiences through faith in the incarnation of the Son of God."³⁹ Alfons Auer also paints a similar picture: "In the Eucharist, the cosmic-human association, founded in creation and exalted in the incarnation to brotherhood in Christ, progressively reaches reality."⁴⁰ Auer indicates the ongoing transformation in the following words: "In the Eucharist, the world is on the road to its fulfilment."⁴¹

Applying this principle to our ecological problem, every Christian is not only absorbed, but also being transformed in the Eucharistic celebration with values of proper attachment to and detachment from the world. While the assembly celebrates the mystery, the faithful are invited, introduced and reconciled to the cosmic mystery, which is liturgically made present. The congregation, thus,

experiences the cosmic reality and commits to the full transformation of the world, in and through a simultaneous attachment and detachment, involvement and renunciation, "yes" and "no" to the world, respecting, the fundamental relationship of Nature-Neighbour-Other.

The Eucharistic communion unites the faithful with the triad. It enables the faithful to be with the Lord. Thus recovers orientation in life. It helps them to be united among themselves. Thus bridges the brokenness of relationship with the Neighbour. It revives them to be committed to the world. Thus discovering rootedness with Nature. Moreover, the eating and drinking of bread and wine calls for a proper relationship with world, human beings and God, which the eucharistic bread and wine manifest and communicate.

This world vision merits our attention, at least, on two grounds. First, it challenges the human blindness to the inherent and essential interconnectedness among beings in the world which is the root of the present ecological problems. Because, the very moment the human being experiences the above stated value - attachment to and detachment from world, the gist of Christian world vision - and expresses it through one's attitudes and actions, it is an openness to the existing and governing principles of relationships in the world. The blindness is substituted with an openness to the Nature, Neighbour

36. Walter DURIG, "Symbol of the Consecration of the World," 126.

37. Walter DURIG, "Symbol of the Consecration of the World," 127.

38. Walter DURIG, "Symbol of the Consecration of the World," 127.

39. Walter DURIG, "Symbol of the Consecration of the World," 125-126.

40. Alfons AUER, "The Changing Character of the Christian Understanding of the World" in *The Christian and the World: Readings in theology*, (Innsbruck: The Canisianum, 1965), 36.

41. Alfons AUER, "The Christian Understanding of the World," 36.

and the Other. The celebration drives everyone of the congregation home to this openness to the relationship with Nature, Neighbour and the Other, which is a challenge to change the blinded and blinding vision of the world that leads us to the ecological problems.

Next, it promotes, propagates and perpetuates the fundamental relationships that which provides and preserves the harmony of life here on earth. Because, the assembly assimilates, admires and acclaims the values of Christian world vision that are manifested in and through the celebration. Further, the value finds its translation in the life situation, for it is the spontaneous out flow of one's being. Looking from another angle of view, what we celebrate is nothing but our beingness and is for our well being.

There arises a number of crucial questions. Were we not celebrating this world-vision in the Eucharistic liturgy for years? Why, then, persist the ecological problems? What is the contribution of the celebration to the solution of ecological problems, if at

all there is any? These are questions of importance and relevance. I do not attempt to answer these above and like questions. Nevertheless, the blindness to the dynamism and the ethical dimensions of Eucharistic celebrations and a blinding separation between life and liturgy [or even theology] could give some hints to the ineffectiveness of such, otherwise rich and enriching celebration of values.⁴² Blindness to the Christian world vision, which is a synthesis of cosmic and eschatological visions, celebrated in the Eucharist, might have contributed to the fruitlessness of the celebration.

The medicine for the blindness is nothing but celebration itself. For, the celebration helps the community to remember the rhythm, the triad of relationship, the memory of the mystery of salvation. The memory of the Church "is both *anamnetic* and *epicletic*, and it is eucharistically centred."⁴³ The moment one recaptures the memory of the mystery of faith, it will be expressed in thanksgiving. Regular celebration of the Eucharist transforms

42 Vigen GUROIAN argues, "one of the reasons Christian moral arguments seem so ungrounded these days is that they have become utterly dislocated and dissociated from Christian worship and liturgy." See *Ethics after Christendom*, 38.

John Paul II also captures this blindness in *Veritatis Splendor* and addresses it as "destructive dichotomy that separates faith from morality." See VS, no. 88. In order to recover this dichotomy John Paul II suggests an urgent rediscovery of "the newness of the faith and its power to judge." See VS, no. 88. William F. Maestri offers, in simple terms, what it means to separate faith from morality. He writes, "To separate faith and morality gives the false impression that faith is simply a set of ideas or propositions which we memorize but which do not affect our daily lives. Nothing could be further from the truth. Faith means that we know Jesus Christ as the living centre of our lives. Faith is *the truth that we live* and practice in our homes, parishes, schools, places of work, and the various associations to which we belong." See William F. Maestri, *What the Church Teaches: A guide for the Study of Veritatis Splendor*, (Boston: St. Paul Books & Media, 1994), 58

43 Vigen GUROIAN, *Ethics after Christendom: Toward an Ecclesial Ethic*, (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1994), 46

one to be a "Eucharistic Man."⁴⁴ Eucharistic celebration not only unveils the mystery, but also refreshes the memory through powerful proclamation of the belief of the community. Thus, celebration brings the memory alive and helps, again and again, to gain the true vision.⁴⁵ Sergio Bastianel pictures the dynamics as follows: "The Eucharistic structure of the life of believers thus generates the Christian's "seeing" in the logic of thanksgiving as well as her or his responding and her or his deciding in praise."⁴⁶ A step further, Dom Gregory Dix suggests, "There, too, is displayed a true hierarchy of functions within a society organically adapted to a single end together with a complete equality

of recompense."⁴⁷ The eucharistic celebration, through its formative exposure and experience, projects a way of life. The thanksgiving rite of the faithful, in the *Syro-Malabar Qurbana*, reflects their eagerness and seriousness with the new way of life.⁴⁸

Besides, to recover the fading memory, Eucharistic celebration represents and refreshes the faithful with the original and living story, each time they gather 'to do it in his memory'. Because the human memory is liable to fading. Beyond doubt, it is part of human experience. In order to keep the memory alive and active in the history of persons, they should have accessibility to the original story. Also

44 Dom Gregory DIX, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, 2nd Edition (London: A & C Black, 1986), xvii. The author proposes this image of "Eucharistic Man," "Over against the dissatisfied 'Acquisitive Man' and his no less avid successor the dehumanised 'Mass-Man' of our economically focussed societies insecurely organized for time, Christianity sets the type of 'Eucharistic Man'—man giving thanks with the product of his labour upon the gifts of God, and daily rejoicing with his fellows in the worshipping society which is grounded in eternity." *Ibidem*, xvii-xviii

45 Speaking about the original vision, A. SCHMEMANN points out that "The natural dependence of man upon the world was intended to be transformed constantly into communion with God in whom is all life. Man was to be the priest of a eucharist, offering the world to God, and in this offering he was to receive the gift of life. But in the fallen world... He does not know that breathing can be communion with God. He does not realize that to eat can be to receive life from God in more than its physical sense [p. 17]." The author continues to illustrate the fallenness as follows: "Man lost the eucharistic life, he lost the life of life itself, the power to transform it into Life. He ceased to be the priest of the world and became of the world and became its slave [p. 17]." He, then, contends that "in Christ, life—life in all its totality—was returned to man, given again as sacrament and communion, made Eucharist [p. 20]." See SCHMEMANN, *For the Life of the World*, (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1982)

46 Sergio BASTIANEL, *Prayer in Christian Moral Life*, trans. Bernard HOOSE, (England: St. Paul Publications, 1988), 90

47 D. G. DIX, *The Shape of the Liturgy*, xvii

48 The following prayer manifests the way of life of the believers. They sincerely desire the newness of life to be continued and carried it out in every sphere of life. "Strengthen, O Lord, the hands which have been outstretched to receive the most Holy unto the forgiveness of sins. Make them worthy to bring forth fruits everyday for your divinity. Make the lips which have praised you within the sanctuary worthy to sing your glory. Let not the ears which have heard the sound of praises hear the

the story must be made available, as far as possible in a living manner, to the followers of the Way. In other words, one should see and hear the very story in a regular interval in order to keep the memory alive and growing. Eucharistic celebration does provide these factors, in the Church, to the faithful in a great measure. Moreover, it is the celebration of the Eucharistic mystery that makes the Church. That is to say, the celebration of the Mystery not only revives the memory, but it also reunites and orientates the community of the faithful, ever loyal to their call.

Thus the Eucharistic celebration not only reveals the Christian world vision but it also renders a hierarchy of values. Since the Christian world vision is a synthesis of cosmic and eschatological visions of the world, it offers the faithful the meaningfulness and purposefulness. This vision also

promotes and perpetuates the relationship of the triad: Nature-Neighbour-Other, the absence of which paves way to the ecological problems. Celebrative atmosphere helps the Christian to appreciate and appropriate these values, as and when they are proclaimed and professed, especially in the eucharistic liturgy. The new life style emerges. The faithful approach the world accordingly.

Thus, this was an attempt to focus on something very fundamental to our Christian existence, the celebration of Liturgy, especially of Eucharistic celebration, to present it as an ethical perspective to offer a possible direction to the present ecological problems by unveiling the Christian world vision that is transmitted lively, in and through celebration for an active, happy and efficient reception and for the concomitant transformation of the congregation.

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voice of terror. Let the eyes which have beheld your great mercy also behold the blessed hope which is from you. Dispose the tongues which have cried holy, for the speaking of truth. Make the feet which have walked in the churches walk in the region of light. Renew the bodies which have eaten your living Body unto new life. To our congregation which has adored your divinity grant all help and may your great love always remain in us and may we abound in it for the singing of your praise. You open the gate to the prayers of us all, and may our service also find entrance into your presence". *The Order of Raza* (Syro-Malabar Bishop's Conference: 1989), 57-58.

Mar Aprem : Patron of Eco-Theology

Eco-theology is a subject of serious discussion all over the world. Today, more than ever humanity is threatened by ecological problems. This problem can be discussed from different points of view. It can be seen as a theological problem. Mar Aprem has profound insights to offer us in the theology of Nature. Mar Aprem (306-373 AD), the 4th century poet theologian was one of the pioneers and pillars of Syrian heritage which forms an integral part of Christian identity. Though eco-theology as a new branch of theology became popular in this century only, even a rapid analysis of Aprem's world vision would manifest the eco-theologian in Aprem before us. S. Brock calls Aprem "the patron saint of ecologically-minded people".¹ This article is an attempt to understand his vision of Nature, Nature as sacrament of God and the human relationship with it.

1. Environmental Crisis as a Theological Reality

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (gen. 1,1). And God found that "it was good". The creation of humans is into this Nature. He is a part of Nature with a special role. The whole revelation of God is in time and space, that is, in history, in and through the created Nature. This leads to the conclusion that "nature is not a nature artificially made up by the human rational

thinking but a holistic view of the existential reality of which man is not a mere spectator, but an infinitesimal part".² So in Bible we see ecocentrism together with anthropocentrism. Both go hand in hand. The Biblical call or vocation for humans is to realize the significant value and role given to Nature by the Creator. This is the basis of eco-theology at all times. In the fourth century itself Mar Aprem could assert this view and that is why it led him to the vision of the world as a sacrament of God. He could see the world as an interconnected whole and not as humans separated from Nature.

2. Aprem's Approach to the Nature

Aprem expressed his theological vision through poetry. Since his most important works are in poetry there is a tendency to think that Aprem is not a theologian. The reason of it may be the misconception that theology should be in a well systematized form as we see in the Greek and Latin world. But Aprem chose a different way of expressing his ideas and insights through the medium of poetry. This may be the reason that made him less popular in the later periods as compared to those in the Latin and Greek traditions.

He avoided western theological style of dogmatic definitions. The

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1. Sebastian Brock, *The Luminous Eye, The Spiritual World Vision of St. Aprem*, 136. Hence forth referred to as *Luminous Eye*.
 2. John B. Chethimattam, "Ecology and Environment in Catholic Perspective", *Krislu Jyothi* VII, 2:50.

reason of it is pointed out by S. Brock as follows:

Aprem's approach serves as a much needed antidote to that tradition of theologizing which seeks to provide theological definitions, Greek *horoi*, or boundaries. To Aprem theological definitions are not only potentially dangerous, but they can also be actually blasphemous. They can be dangerous because by providing boundaries, they are likely to have deadening and fossilizing effect on people's conception of the subject of enquiry, which is, after all, none other than the human experience of God. Dogmatic 'definitions' can moreover, in Aprem's eyes, be actually blasphemous when these definitions touch upon some aspect of God's Being: for by trying to 'define' God one is in effect attempting to contain the uncontainable, to limit the Limitless.³

Aprem's radically different approach to theology is by way of paradox and symbolism. For fulfilling this purpose poetry seemed to him far more superior than prose. Poetry seemed to him as the proper means to defend the Church against the heretics who wrote in verse.⁴ Whereas the philosophical approach tries to set limit to the discussion of particular topic, the symbolic approach attempts, on the contrary, to provide a series of paradoxical pairs of opposites. This is a dynamic process. For example in explaining incarnation of Christ he talks about the great One who became Small and the rich One who became

poor.⁵

This symbolic method of theologizing, in a way, is derived from his interpretation of the Scripture. For Aprem what God has allowed to be said of Himself in the Bible is the primary source for any human knowledge of God. The name of God revealed there and the symbols constitute the meeting point between God and human beings. God in His loving magnanimity has allowed to lower Himself to the level of human understanding and it is for us humans to take advantage of it. Aprem says, "The Scriptures are laid out like a mirror, and he whose eye is lucid sees therein the image of truth."⁶ Thus he uses the methodology of interpretation of Scripture to expose his theological insights and ideas.

Thinking on the methodology adopted by Aprem a question arises in the minds of some people, viz., whether Aprem can be called a serious theologian. This question is out of place because it arises from our present psychological conditioning which makes us think that theology is a systematic and well articulated cerebral exercise on the mystery of faith. But the method adopted by Aprem gives us another side of the reality. Theology need not be confined to the well defined theoretical approach alone. Of course, scholars find it difficult to call Aprem a systematic theologian, but they have no doubt in calling him a great theologian.⁷

Aprem's hymns were incorporated to the liturgy of the early Church. And they have remained central in both

3. *Luminous Eye*, 10.

4. See Vidian F. John Kunnappally, *Aprem Malpan*, 56-57.

5. *Luminous Eye*, 11.

6. *Hymns on Faith*, No. 67:8. Quoted in *Luminous Eye*, 32.

7. *Luminous Eye*, 13.

the eastern and western Syriac liturgy. This shows the rich experiential content of the theological insights in his hymns which can evoke a closer union between God and human beings.

3. Aprem's Theology of Nature

Nothing in creation for Aprem exists in isolation. Everything is interconnected. No person, thing or event in the world exists without a mysterious relation to the whole. When we discussed earlier on the method of theology of Mar Aprem using symbols, we had a passing mention on the ontological chasm between the Creator and the created and the corresponding transcendence and immanence of God. This is also reflected in the 'hidden' and revealed nature of God. Human nature experiences a tension between these two dimensions of God; but ultimately realizes the truth and it leads human beings to God. It is the realization that history and Nature constitute the warp and woof of reality. To divorce an individual or the Nature from its contexts in either direction would destroy the work of God (creation) in time and space. This realization of the nature of God in relation to His creation is the basis of Aprem's vision of the harmony in the universe. Symbols and types are, for Aprem, means by which the interconnectedness of everything, that is, harmony of Nature can be seen. It is a dynamic and exciting way of looking at the world.⁸

God has made Himself available in Nature. To understand this harmony between God and Nature what we need is discernment and not investigation. Aprem expresses this insight as follows:

In the case of Godhead, what cre-

ated being is able to investigate Him?

For there is a great chasm between him and the Creator.

In the case of the Godhead, it is not that He is distant from His possessions, for there exists love between Him and creation.

None of those who try to investigate God has ever drawn near to Him.

Yet He is extremely close to those who have discernment.⁹

God reveals his 'hiddenness' through symbols. Aprem's selection of these symbols are mostly from the Nature itself. He takes the symbol of clothing ("putting on") to express the mystery of incarnation. God's effort to teach us is compared to the effort of somebody to teach a parrot. The kingdom of God is symbolized by the 'pearl'. Aprem takes symbols from agriculture and from the environment. Aprem's tremendous appreciation of the created universe is reflected also in the case of 'names' of God, especially in the case of 'borrowed names'. They are metaphors mostly drawn from ordinary human experience. Thus Aprem's theology is deeply rooted in Nature. His spiritual vision is not 'fleeing from the world' but it is one of realizing the world in its ontological association with God. God relates to humanity in the world. Aprem's poetic theology is based upon the vision of the universe as a vast system of symbols and mysteries.

The nature stands side by side with the scripture to bear witness to God. Aprem observes:

In his book Moses described the creation of the natural world,

8. *Luminous Eye*, 40.

9. *Hymns on Faith*, No. 69, quoted in *Luminous Eye*, 49.

so that both the natural world
and his book
might testify to the Creator:
the natural world, through man's
use of it,
the book, through his reading
of it.¹⁰

In the Scripture we see a lot of references to the natural symbolisms. Jesus himself takes most of his symbolic imageries from the ordinary world to reveal great mysteries. Aprem in his theology of Nature makes use of the biblical typology.¹¹ In fact it plays a central role here. Christ's entry into the world as the perfection of all revelation gave real intrinsic value to the created universe.

A. Nature as Sacrament of God

The harmony within Nature and the relation of God (in the twin dimensions of transcendence and immanence) with the Nature leads Aprem to the conception of the created universe as a sacrament of God. Everything in this world is a sacrament in the sense that they are signs of the 'hidden' God and also that it reveals to those who approach it with discernment the reality of God Himself. S. Brock observes:

When Ephrem explores the infinite number of symbol and types in Nature and Scripture we must be constantly aware that, although human understanding of them is essentially fluid and variable, what they all point to is an objective

reality that Ephrem calls 'truth'. Furthermore, the presence in the types and symbols of what he calls the 'hidden power', or 'meaning' lends to them some sort of inner objective significance or reality, which is different from that outer reality which the scientific observer would call objective.¹²

The universe as sacrament signifies another important idea that has something to do with the finality of the things in the world. It is the means by which meaning can be found infused in everything. The presence of the 'hidden power' accords the deeper meaning in spite of the vehicle's (thing or person) awareness of the indwelling presence of God. Aprem notes:

Lord, your symbols are everywhere,
yet you are hidden from everywhere,
Though your symbol is on high,
yet the height does not perceive
that You are:
though Your symbol is in the depth,
it does not comprehend who You
are:
though Your symbol is in the sea,
You are hidden from the sea;
though Your symbol is on dry land,
it is not aware what You are.
Blessed is the Hidden One shining
out.¹³

The world is the creation of God. Every beauty of daily life is a tangible reminder of the graciousness of God. Aprem observes:

10. *Hymns on Paradise*. No. 5, quoted in *Luminous Eye*, 137.

11. Sometimes Aprem mixes the symbols of Nature with biblical typology. For example, in his *Hymns on Nativity*. No. 4, he says:

"In the frost that stripped all the trees
a Shoot budded for us from the house of Jesse."

See McVey (trans), *Ephrem the Syrian, hymns*, 91.

12. *Luminous Eye*, 39.

13. *Hymns on Faith*, No. 3, quoted in *Luminous Eye*, 39.

and He imprinted His symbols
 upon His possessions.
 When He created the world,
 He gazed at it an adorned it
 with His images.
 Streams of His symbols opened,
 flowed and poured forth
 His symbols on its members.¹⁸

Human beings are invited to respond
 to this call of God in Nature.

For Aprem the relation of humans
 to the Nature not only depends upon
 his unique position among the created
 beings, but also is based on a privileged
 place enjoyed by certain material
 things because they link the world of
 Nature with the world of Scripture.
 That privileged place is rooted in
 their physical properties and their
 names. For example, oil is sym-
 bolic of Christ and the salvation
 brought by him, not only because he
 is literally "the anointed One," but
 also because of the natural properties
 of oil: its healing and strengthening
 properties, its use with pigments for
 painting an image and its ability to
 ease friction.¹⁹

b) Violence to the Nature

Moral evil has its power over
 human beings. The misuse of free will
 disturbs the cosmic harmony and order.
 According to Aprem the ill effects on
 the natural order, brought about by
 human misuse of the divine gift of
 free will can already be observed in
 the paradigmatic account of Paradise
 and the Fall.²⁰ Aprem explains this
 idea as follows:

The sprouting of the thorns
 (Gen. 3:18)

testified to the novel sprouting
 of wrong actions,
 for thorns did not sprout
 as long as wrong-doing had not
 yet burst forth;
 but once there had peered out
 hidden wrong choices made
 by free will,
 then the visible thorns began
 to peer out from the earth.²¹

In his commentary on *Gen. 3*,
 Aprem states that had there been no
 sin, the earth would never have
 brought forth the thorns. In the similar
 way wild animals prove harmful to
 human beings only after the Fall. In
 Paradise all animals lived in harmony
 with Adam and Eve. This harmony
 will be restored in the eschatological
 Paradise. Occasionally it is anticipated
 on earth especially in the lives of the
 saints.²²

The injustice committed by human
 beings have far reaching consequences
 which go beyond the immediate con-
 text of the same. By taking the bibli-
 cal example of queen Jezebel (*1 Kings*
21) Aprem explains this theme:

Since Jezebel refused the truth,
 the earth refused her ingathering
 A reproach bereaved the womb of
 the seed that the farmers lent her.
 It choked seeds inside it since
 her dwellers bereaved truth,
 and the bearer became barren
 which was not in her custom,
 and the pitcher and horn,
 barren, brought forth
 were fruitful—which is not
 in their nature,
 since the voice that bereaved the
 earth made barren wombs fruitful.²³

18 *Hymns of Virginity*, No. 20, quoted in McVey, *Op. cit.*, 41–42.

19 See McVey, *Op. cit.*, 48.

20 *Luminous Eye*, 137.

21 *Hymns on Heresies*, No. 28, quoted in *Luminous Eye*, 137.

22 See *Ibid.*, p. 138; Cf. *Hymns on Heresies*, No. 21 and *Prose Refutations* 1.

23. *Hymns of Virginity*, No. 7, quoted in McVey, *Op. cit.*, 293.

At the time of crucifixion of Jesus' the mountains shook, graves were opened and the temple veil was torn (*Mt*, 27, 51). Commenting on these ecological 'reactions' Aprem writes:

Because the mouth of the human beings had condemned Him, the voice of creation cried out to proclaim Him innocent. Men were silent, so the stones cried out.²⁴

Does Aprem's ecological concept support worship of Nature? Not at all. The worship of Nature is a sin against Nature and God. The pagans err in worshipping the works of God rather than God their Creator. Conversely the Marcionites err in claiming to worship God while denying the goodness and beauty of God's creation. The correct path is through Nature to the revelation of God in Scripture.²⁵

c) Restoration of the Harmony

By the Fall the original harmony in the world is lost. What about the re-establishment of the original harmony in the Nature? It is by the observance of the principle of justice that harmony, both in the society and in the creation as a whole is created. Injustice destroys this harmony. The original state of harmony was destroyed by the abuse of human free will. However, the potential of recovery is always present. It is through the right choices and through the right use of creation. It is possible through the co-operation of all people as the members of the same body. This lost harmony can be restored only through the binding principle of love and sharing. Aprem observes:

For just as in the case of the limbs of the body, their individual needs are fulfilled by one another, so too the inhabitants of the world fill in the common need from the common excess. We should rejoice in this need on the part of us all, for out of it is born harmony for us all; for in that people need one another, those in high position stoop to the lowly and are not ashamed, and the insignificant reach out to the powerful and are not afraid. Even in the case of animals, seeing that we have a need for them we take care of them. Clearly our need for everything binds us with love for everything.²⁶

4. Aprem's Theology of Nature: An Evaluation

In this essay we were trying to see an important theme in the poetic theology of Mar Aprem, viz., the eco-theology. Aprem's insights into the theology of Nature is very relevant today in the context of increasing ecological awareness. Some humble observations are made here.

A. The Scripture

The essence of Aprem's theology is the revelation of God in history. And Scripture is the written record of the revelation of God in the life of Jesus coupled with the response to it—the faith—by the early Christian community. So Aprem's theological vision is essentially Scriptural. Scripture for him is laid out like a mirror, and he whose eye is lucid sees therein the image of Truth.²⁷ This great insight on Bible is reasserted after sixteen centuries by the Vatican Council II:

24. *Commentary on Diatessaron*. 21:5, quoted in *Luminous Eye*, 138.

25. McVey, *Eprem the Syrian*, 48.

26. *Letter to Hypatius*, quoted in *Luminous Eye*, 139.

27. *Hymns on Faith*, No. 67:8, quoted in *Luminous Eye*, 32.

"The sacred scripture of both new and old testments, are like a mirror in which the Church, during its pilgrim journey here on earth, contemplates God.²⁸ In fact this vision is always at the background of Aprem's vision of the universe. This is just an example to point out the fact that Aprem's theology is very much relevant today also. And consequently he is not to be confined to the theological circles of one particular tradition alone.

B. A Systematic Theology?

Today we generally think of theology as a theoretical or well articulated system of thought. The essence of theology consists in the fact that it is basically a faith reflection. Then it need not be restricted to a well articulated cerebral exercise on the mystery of faith. Aprem proves this fact by his poetic theology. Scholars find it difficult to call Aprem a systematic theologian; but they have no doubt in calling him as a great theologian.

Through his eco-theology Mar Aprem has pointed out the other side of the theoretical or definitional method. Theological definitions, for Aprem can not only be potentially dangerous, but also can be actually blasphemous. The reason is that they provide 'boundaries' and give a 'deadening' and 'fossilizing' effect on people's experience of God. They can be blasphemous when these definitions touch upon the Being of God, because by trying to 'define' one is in effect attempting to limit the limitless.²⁹ But then Aprem is only trying to show the limitations of this theoretical or definitional method. What we need today is such a theology like that of Mar Aprem vibrant with experience

of God and the power to inspire people.

3. The Hidden and the Revealed

Another great insight in Aprem's theology of revelation which is the basis of his eco-theology is the 'hidden' and 'revealed' aspects of God's revelation. From the human perspective God is hidden except in so far as He allows Himself to be revealed. And this hiddenness (*kasyuta*) will never be fully eliminated. Even in the incarnation, where God's nature is most fully revealed, the Divinity retains its *kasyuta*. At the same time it is the divine perspective (*srara*) that is being revealed. And it is what objectively exists. The question here is what then is the reality or the role of the created world in God's revelation?

In answering this question, it would be enlightening to point out the comparison between Aprem's ideas of 'hidden' and 'revealed' with the Hindu concepts of '*avarana*' and '*viksepa*' in relation to the worldly things. In the Hindu approach to the Absolute, the worldly things are considered *maya*. *Maya* is defined as "*sat asat anirvacaniyam*" (it is real, unreal and undefinable). The worldly things or *maya* has two dimensions, viz., *avarana* (concealing) and *viksepa* (revealing). The worldly things are real (objective) in so far as it reveals the Absolute. They are unreal in so far as they conceal the Absolute. So the classical system of Hindu theology gives only a *pratibhasika* (practical) value to the things in the world when compared to the Absolute.

This Hindu pattern of thinking is in a similar line with that of

28. *Dei Verbum*, No. 7.

29. See *The Luminous Eye*, 10.

Mar Aprem. Aprem's objective dimension of revelation (*srara*) can be compared to the *sat* (real) aspect of *maya*, and the human perspective (*kasyula*) to the undefinable (*anirvacaniya*) aspect of *maya*. Aprem gives intrinsic value to the world in so far as God by his incarnation has given it the intrinsic value. So all things in the world have an indicative role; they are pointers to God. And therefore it has a symbolic value. This fact leads Aprem to the conclusion that this world is a sacrament of God. Consequently Aprem's spirituality is not to flee from the world; it is the realization or the discernment of the world. All other – the Scriptures, history, and things in the world – have only a symbolic value in the sense that they reflect God to a person who has 'lucid' or luminous eye. According to Aprem the Symbolic approach is the best way for us to 'reach' or 'realize' God. Thus Aprem's vision of Nature serves as a basis and inspiration of an eco-spirituality.

Conclusion

Mar Aprem, by conceiving this world as a sacrament of God, brings forth eco-theology to the forefront of Christian theological investigation. For Aprem the harmony of the human nature is intimately related to the harmony of the universe. Ecological harmony, on the other hand, depends upon human being's exercise of the freedom which God has given to them as a free gift. Violence to Nature involves misuse of this free will. There exists the possibility of restoration of

the lost harmony: the culmination of this reconciliatory process is being fulfilled in Christ.

Today when we quote the statement of Karl Rahner that "God lays hold of matter when the logos become flesh"³⁰ as an ecological assertion we should not forget the fact that Mar Aprem has asserted it centuries before when he affirmed that Christ by his incarnation has given intrinsic value to the things in the world.

Very often theology presents redemption as something pertaining only to humans. But many Biblical texts shun this exclusivism and express the hope of cosmic redemption (IS 11, 6-9; 65, 17-25; COL 1, 15-20; ICOR 15,25; EPH 1,10; ROM 8,19-22). In the New Testament Christ is the beginning and the end of creation, and he is the one in whom salvation has been accomplished. In Eph 1, 10 Paul presents consummation as *anekephaleosis*, that is, bringing all creation together with Christ as head (*anekaphaliosasthai ta panta en te Christo*). Allan D. Galloway says that this cosmic redemption was "the very heart of primitive Gospel".³¹ This deep insight into the Christian fulfilment was a key insight in the eco-theology of Mar Aprem. Thus he presents before us an integral view of the universe challenging us to get involved in the matters of the world without being attached to it. This world is the world of God and it is here we have to achieve our self-realization and God-realization.

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30. Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*. (Trans. William D. Dych), 196.

31. *The Cosmic Christ*, x.

News

1 Pope John Paul II invites the faithful to appreciate the spiritual treasures of the Eastern Christian traditions

Pope John Paul II in his general audience on 9 August 1995 spoke on the spiritual richness of the Eastern Christian traditions. The main theme of his speech was ecumenism.

Referring to the teaching of Vat II (UR, 14) on ecumenism, Pope referred to the importance of the relations between the Eastern Orthodox Churches and the Catholic Church. Pope admits that the West has received a "great deal from the East in the area of liturgy, spiritual tradition, juridical order" and praises them for preserving faithfully those ancient traditions. Many basic dogmas of the Christian faith were either defined in the Councils held in the East or developed in the East. About the importance of liturgical tradition Pope says: The Eastern Churches celebrate the liturgy with great love. This is especially true with regard to the Eucharistic celebration". The devotion to Mary and importance given to monastic life in the East were also highlighted in his talk. Regarding the theological diversity Pope says: The various theological formulas of the East and the West are frequently complementary rather than conflicting", and quoting Vat II (UR 17) he says "the authentic theological traditions of the Orientals are admirably rooted in Holy Scripture".

2. Assembly of the Lebanese Synod

Pope John Paul II announced, after praying the Angelus on 15 August 1995, that the Special Assembly for Lebanon of the Synod of Bishops will begin on 26 November 1995 and invited the faithful to pray for the success of the Synod.

3. New Metropolitan for Aleppo

Archimandrite Jean Clement Jeanbart has been elected as the new Metropolitan Archbishop of Aleppo for the Greek Melkites by the Synod of Bishops. Pope John Paul II has given his assent to the election.

4. Three new Archdioceses and Archbishops for the Latin Church in India

Pope John Paul II has reorganised the ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the north-eastern part of India by erecting three new Archdioceses and appointing new Archbishops. They are:-

- 1) Shillong - Abp. Tarcisius Resto Phanrang, S.D.B.
- 2) Guwahati - Abp. Thomas Menampampil, S.D.B.
- 3) Imphal - Abp. Joseph Mittathany

5. Yves Congar died

The famous theologian Yves Congar died on 22 June 1995. He was 91. He was born in Sedan in 1904; entered the Dominican novitiate of Le Saulchoir in 1925. It was during this period that he realised his vocation to work for the unity of Christians. He had a passionate love for ecumenism. He believed that true unity is possible only if the Church is true to the Gospel of its founder. His thinking on tradition has been influenced by the famous historian Marie Dominique Chenu who was Professor at Le Saulchoir where Fr. Congar also taught. Frs. Congar, Chenu and Feret together published many books and articles and founded a theological collection *Unam Sanctam*. All the three had to suffer for their theological position. Disciplinary action was

taken against them. It was His Holiness Pope John XXIII who reinstated Congar by appointing him as a *peritus* in the Council Vatican II. Through this position he could influence many of the theologically important positions of Vat II. Among other Documents of Vat II, *Lumen Gentium* and *Gaudium et Spes* deserve special mention.

Fr. Congar's contribution did not end with the Council. His creative thinking continued even after and outside the Council. The book *Diversity and Communion*, published in 1982 reveals his latest views on ecumenical theology. His perspectives on ecumenism, position of the Laity in the Church etc. are unique and have had great impact in the Church. Ecumenical theology starts from a vision of unity and diversity in the Church. The traditional claim of the Latin Church as the universal Church is corrected and the equality of all Churches is well developed. It is the only way for a true and genuine ecumenism.

Pope John Paul II had elevated Fr. Congar to the dignity of Cardinal at the age of 90 as a recognition of his valuable, sincere and faithful service to the Church. His death is a loss to the whole Church.

6. Syro-Malabar Vice Province for the Congregation of the Redemptorists

The Congregation of the Redemptorists in India gets a vice-Province in Kerala. This is to enable its members belonging to the Syro-Malabar Oriental Church to keep their ecclesial identity. At present these members have to follow the Latin Rite. The official inauguration of the vice-Province took place on July 3rd 1995 at Chowara near Kalady in Ernakulam Dt., Kerala. His Eminence Antony Cardinal Padiyara, the Major Archbishop of the Syro-Malabar Archepiscopal Church, presided over the function and Fr. Josse Fonseca C. Ss. R. the Provincial of Bangalore Province, read out the decree of erection. The new vice-Province has at present 30 members and 40 candidates. Fr. Michael Naickanparampil is the Vice-Provincial.

7. Redemptorist Vice-Province in Syro-Malabar Rite

An autonomous Vice-Province of Redemptorist Congregation in Syro-Malabar rite has been erected on 3rd July 1995 at Chowara (Aluva) by Fr. Lasso, the Superior General of the Congregation. Mar Antony Padiyara, the Major Archbishop of Syro-Malabar Church presided over the function and Fr. Jose Fonseca, Provincial of Bangalore Province, read out the decree of the General Superior erecting the Vice-Province. Redemptorists have 44 Provinces and 29 vice-Provinces spread through 63 countries.

Redemptorist Congregation is founded by St. Alphonsus de Liguori in 1732 in Naples of Italy for the sole purpose of evangelization, especially among the poor and the abandoned. The congregation was brought to India by Irish Redemptorists.

In Kerala, all Redemptorists except two belong to the oriental rite and were adopted to the Latin Province. Vatican II exhorts all the religious and the faithful on their right to live and work according to the spirit of one's own rite. The Syro-Malabar members of Redemptorists made an earnest effort to study the implications of Vatican teaching and conducted many seminars with the help of the Professors from Vadavathoor Seminary. After much study and discernment, they applied to the general for the erection of separate unit. He granted the request and erected a Region in 1992 and now he raised it to the status of Autonomous Vice Province. It has 3 houses & 30 members. It has about 40 young men in different stages of formation. The Vice-Province is headed by Fr. Michael Naickanparampil (Vice Provincial) and his consultors Frs. Thomas Mulanjanani and George Areecal.

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